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ABSTRACT

This volume is the final report of a national project which examined the resettlement of Laotian Hmong refugees in the United States. The study methodology included a review of literature about the Hmong; in-depth case studies of seven Hmong resettlements across the nation; discussions with informants in over 40 other Hmong communities; and interviews with national Hmong leaders and spokespeople. The report is divided into four major sections. The first presents an overview of the Hmong, including their traditional lifestyle and economy, the impact of the 1954-75 wars, experiences in Thai refugee camps after 1975, and resettlement in other countries. Section II examines the settlement patterns of Hmong in the United States, and discusses factors influencing where Hmong were initially placed and why many have continued to migrate within the country. Section III focuses on how the ongoing Hmong resettlement appears to be faring and identifies some problems and solutions (including economic adjustment, English acquisition, education of children, and groups with special needs). Finally, section IV presents a summary and recommendations. Four appendices include: brief case study site descriptions; community informants' estimates of Hmong community characteristics; estimated statistics on Hmong population and public assistance rates in the United States; and a transcript of a group meeting with Hmong high school students. (KH)

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THE HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY

VOLUME 1

FINAL REPORT

April 1985

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PREFACE

The Hmong Resettlement Study is a national project funded by the U. S. Office of Refugee Resettlement. The Study is the joint undertaking of Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (Portland, Oregon), the University of Minnesota and Lao Family Community (Santa Ana, California). The main purposes of the Study are to examine closely the resettlement of Hmong refugees in the United States, focusing on issues, and to answer the following questions:

What has been the resettlement experience of the Hmong?

- o How are the Hmong faring in terms of employment, dependence, and adjustment?
- o Are there areas of employment in which the Hmong have been particularly successful?
- o What do resettlement workers and the Hmong regard as the major impediments to effective Hmong resettlement and self-sufficiency?
- o What role does secondary migration play in the resettlement of the Hmong? What are the reasons for secondary migration among this group? What are the implications for resettlement strategies?

What resettlement efforts and economic strategies have provided effective results for the Hmong?

- o How are problems being handled? What kinds of solutions are being tried, by different resettlement communities and by the Hmong themselves?
- o What factors account for the effective resettlement of the Hmong in certain communities? Which resettlement efforts have proved to be the most promising?
- o How many and what kinds of entrepreneurial economic development projects involving the Hmong are currently in operation, e.g., farming projects, Pa ndau cooperatives? How were they developed and how successful are they?
- o What kinds of Hmong employment strategies have been particularly successful?

How might current strategies be changed to result in more effective resettlement and long-term adjustment of the Hmong?

- o How might resettlement be conducted differently for the Hmong? What new projects and approaches are being considered by those involved in Hmong resettlement? How would the Hmong want resettlement to be done differently?

- o How can the Hmong be resettled in a way that better utilizes their strengths and unique characteristics?
- o What do the Hmong want for themselves? What do Hmong view as essential for effective resettlement? What are their goals for the future? For the next generation of Hmong?

The findings presented here are based on a year-long study of Hmong resettlement which has used a variety of methods: (1) a review of the literature about the Hmong, their history and resettlement, and analysis of existing data; (2) indepth case studies of seven Hmong resettlement sites across the nation; (3) discussions with informants in over 40 other Hmong communities; and (4) interviews with national Hmong leaders and spokespeople. The case studies consisted of several weeks of fieldwork in each site, during which numerous meetings and interviews were held. Group meetings were held with Hmong leaders and heads of households of different clan groups, with college and college-bound students, with women and with adolescents. Interviews were conducted with Hmong leaders and other Hmong informants; Hmong families (in their homes); officials from various private, city, county and state agencies serving the Hmong, including individuals active in the public schools, adult ESL programs, employment services, welfare, voluntary organizations, hospitals, economic and farming agencies, interagency groups, and churches. Descriptive and statistical information was compiled from numerous documents provided by these agencies in each site. On-site case studies were conducted in:

Orange County, California
 Fresno, California
 Portland, Oregon
 Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota
 Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas
 Fort Smith, Arkansas
 Providence, Rhode Island

Fieldwork for the case studies began in December 1982 and was completed in June 1983. This Final Report represents the status of Hmong resettlement at that time.

Staff from the participating institutions worked as a team to conduct the overall project and the seven case studies and to prepare this report.

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The results of the project are available to the public as a series of
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Reports

Vol. 1: Final Report
Vol. 2: Economic Development
Vol. 3: Exemplary Projects
Executive Summary (written in English)
Executive Summary (written in Lao)
Executive Summary (written in Hmong)

Site Reports:

Orange County, California
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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE HMONG

Introduction

The Hmong have made a long journey from Laos to the United States. Knowledge of their history and culture is essential for understanding the process and current status of Hmong resettlement in this country. This first chapter presents an overview of the experiences of the Hmong prior to coming to the United States. The traditional lifestyle and economy of the Hmong were characterized by an agricultural, barter economy and a social structure based on strong family and lineage group ties. In the isolated mountains of Laos, the traditional Hmong, who until the 1950s had no writing system for their language, had little access to education or literacy. Beginning with the French colonial rule in Indochina and especially after World War II, Hmong traditional lifestyle began to change (though very slowly) as contacts with Western education and goods expanded.

The civil wars in Laos, beginning in 1954 and continuing through the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, radically changed the isolated settlement pattern and traditional economy of the Hmong. Though some Hmong did not live near combat zones, tens of thousands of Hmong became refugees in their own land, abandoning their homes and livelihood as the war expanded. In the 1960s, thousands of Hmong soldiers fought in the CIA-led "secret war" in Laos; many report having been promised by the Americans that they would be taken care of in the event their country was "lost" to opposing forces. Hmong troops suffered heavy casualties, and

nearly every Hmong now in the United States lost a relative to the war. Besides these casualties and widespread physical injuries and psychological trauma, the war left the Hmong with a whole generation of uneducated young people who lost opportunities for schooling to the conflict.

Because of retaliation from the controlling communist forces, Hmong began to flee Laos in 1975 after the American withdrawal from Southeast Asia. Those who survived the flight waited in the overcrowded refugee camps in Thailand up to five years for resettlement to third countries, including the United States, where they hoped to build a new life for themselves and their children.

Laos: The Traditional Hmong

Traditional Economy and Migration

By most accounts, the Hmong migrated to Laos from Southern China beginning in the early part of the 19th century (see Geddes, 1976; Lee, 1982; Yang, 1975; Whitaker et al., 1972). In Laos, a country comprised of many ethnic groups, the Hmong have traditionally dwelled in the isolated mountain regions, dispersed in hundreds of small villages. Because of their isolation, dispersion and traditional patterns of migration, it has been difficult to ascertain with certainty the size of the Hmong population in Laos. Yang Dao (1975), drawing from a variety of sources, estimated the 1970 Lao Hmong population at around 300,000 or about one-tenth of the entire population of Laos at the time. Other estimates are somewhat higher. For example, Le Monde reported on January 5, 1971, that there were 400,000 Hmong in Laos. A knowledgeable

Hmong informant contacted during this Study placed the pre-war Hmong population in Laos as high as 600,000. Before the outbreak of heavy fighting in the 1960s, Hmong were most numerous in the northern provinces of Houa Phan and Xieng Khouang.

Economy. Hmong traditional economy in Laos was agricultural. Chickens, pigs, cattle and other animals were raised, supplemented by game from the surrounding forests. The Hmong raised food crops mainly consisting of rice, corn and vegetables in fields which had been cleared by cutting and burning sections of the uninhabited and isolated mountain forests. As the soil in these fields wore out every 3 years or so, new fields were prepared; usually the fields were located a few hours walking distance from the villages. Villages averaged about 10-20 households, but sometimes contained as many as 40 extended family households, with an average of about 7-8 individuals per household (see Geddes, 1976; Lemoine, 1972; Whitaker et al., 1972; Yang, 1975).

In this traditional economy, barter was the main basis of exchange. Cash, usually in the form of silver or opium, was used mainly for trade of such items as salt, medicine and fabric. Opium poppies constituted the main Hmong cash crop; opium itself was exchanged for silver bars or sometimes used as silver since its value was widely known. Among the traditional Hmong, silver was used for accumulating wealth and important exchanges such as bride price; paper money was not trusted (Lemoine, 1972).

Of necessity Hmong villages had to be quite self-sufficient, since communication and transportation networks were still undeveloped and became even more difficult in the rainy seasons. Thus each village was likely to have the necessary skills among its members to support itself

with little outside help: blacksmiths, shamans, medicine experts, midwives and scribes (Vang, n.d.). Economic independence and self-sufficiency were valued Hmong traits, and the Hmong in Laos gained a reputation among the ethnic groups for their high level of initiative, resourcefulness and energy, along with their strong social organization (Smalley, 1956; Whitaker et al., 1972).

Migration. Migration has long been an important element of Hmong traditional lifestyle. Thao (1982) notes: "The traditional Hmong have always moved from site to site in hope and expectation of bettering their living conditions" (p. 113). As land became infertile and no more fields could be cleared within walking distance of the village, new sites had to be found. An additional reason to leave a village was to escape epidemic diseases. In such cases the whole village would move together to the new site, which was chosen for the quality of the soil, absence of disease, "luckiness" or auspiciousness of a location, and proximity to the old village. New villages were very seldom located more than a day or two's walk from the original settlement (see Geddes, 1970, 1976; Thao, 1982; Yang, 1975).

Thao (1982) outlines the traditional decision-making process in moving. New sites were discovered by villagers while hunting or through information from relatives in other places or strangers passing through town. The potential site would be brought to the attention of the village leader, who played a significant role in both the decision to move and the choice of a new settlement site, and he would convince household heads to make an exploratory trip to the proposed location. If the place was satisfactory to most of the heads of households, the leader would decide to move. Sometimes some of the household heads liked a new

site, but the village leader did not; the household heads were free to move their families to the new site. Establishing a new village took place only after the New Year, around December or January, when the weather was dry and land could be cleared for new crops; the household heads went ahead of the others, built houses and furniture, and prepared the new fields, then came back for their families (Thao, 1982; Whitaker et al., 1972).

A second pattern of traditional migration was also active. This was a move to an already occupied village. Almost always, more than one clan resided in each village, since marriage partners must be drawn from distinct clans. However, marriages very often involved spouses from more distant Hmong villages, and over time many ties were built up between villages. Within a village, one particular clan usually grew larger and acquired more power in the affairs of the village, often prompting the smaller kin groups to look for opportunities to unite with their kin in other villages and thus consolidate power. A leader of such a minority group might try to convince his members to move to another site or get others of the clan to move into his village. Sometimes families moved to be reunited with relatives who had been separated by marriage (Geddes, 1976; Thao, 1982; Yang, 1975). In this kind of unification or reunification move, the decision-making process was much the same as for moving to an unoccupied site. Families were housed with relatives in the new village until they had re-established their own households.

In the traditional migration pattern, families moved as often as every 3 years or, in "lucky" villages, might stay as long as 20 years or more. It was considered fortunate to have found a location where the soil and crops were good, the health of the village was good, and the family could stay for a long time.

Traditional Social Structure and Decision-making Patterns

The traditional Hmong social organization has been described as being organized into approximately 20 clans who recruit their members through patrilineal descent. Hmong clans, as noted above, are exogamous (marriages must be between spouses from distinct clans), patrilineal, and widely dispersed. Individual clans are hierarchical, with a fictive ancestor at the apex of the clan's genealogical tree. Individual clans are divided into important subclan units whose members can trace descent through male lines to a common ancestor. Although certain reciprocal rights and responsibilities are shared by all members of a given Hmong clan (even those who may not know each other), much closer ties and mutual responsibilities are shared by members of a particular patrilineage (which will herein be termed simply a "lineage group"). Lineage groups are the primary unit of the Hmong "extended family," whose members traditionally have lived together in a village or cluster of proximate villages. Details of ritual ceremonies are performed the same way by members of a lineage group, a fact which both marks members' common patrilineal descent and binds their emotional and cultural lives closely together. Such groups tend to share material and human resources for the accomplishment of important activities in traditional life. As noted above, Hmong migration patterns in the highlands of Laos tended to unify or reunify members of these lineage groups. Traditionally, ties to a lineage group are the most durable and dependable relationships a Hmong individual has. One is expected to provide support to these family group members, and in turn one can always count on help from another member when in need.

Traditional Hmong society thus tends to be organized segmentally and hierarchically. The smallest social unit is the household, comprised of the household head and wife, their sons and sons' wives and children. Households whose heads belong to the same lineage group comprise the next larger social unit. Each lineage group has a leader, usually chosen informally by consensus of its household heads from among the elder and most capable of the household heads.

In political matters, Hmong men traditionally play the principal role. Each village is ruled by a chief with one or two helpers, preferably chosen from the heads of the village's lineage groups. The chief presides over ceremonies and rites, settles litigation between families and organizes collective work projects (Yang, 1972). Major lineage groups encompassing several villages in a region are headed by leaders known as Kaitong. The first Hmong Canton chiefs, Tasseng, were appointed in Xieng Khouang during the French administration. Their duty was to govern all the Kaitong and Hmong chiefs in the jurisdiction.

The hierarchical nature of Hmong political leadership must not be misconstrued to imply that decision-making is traditionally a "top down" process, with decisions made at the highest possible level and then passed down through the hierarchy. In fact, the opposite is most often the case: Decisions are made at the lowest practical level appropriate to the particular issue (Dunnigan, 1983). Some decisions, such as those pertaining to disputes between members of a single household, are made by the household head. Other decisions may be made at the lineage group level, such as decisions about relocation and migration. Disputes between groups or villages are handled at appropriately higher levels.

In almost all cases, Hmong leadership and decision-making depend on close cooperation and consensus building. Strong, influential leaders are expected to listen carefully to all viewpoints, and try to build a consensus among the group or groups involved. The ability to continue functioning as an effective leader depends on maintenance of such a consensus, which has served as a check against arbitrary and unpopular leadership in Hmong life.

Education and Literacy

Education. Formal schooling is a relatively recent phenomenon in Hmong society. Access to schools was severely limited for the isolated hill tribes of Laos before World War II, and virtually no Hmong in those areas received a formal education before this time. The first village school was set up in the high mountain region in 1939 (Barney, 1967; Yang, 1975). The number of individuals with some education increased slightly as schools became accessible to the villages; however, if students wished to receive schooling beyond the third year, they generally had to go to stay in the larger towns. In 1962, there were 11,000 villages in Laos, and only 1,700 schools; only one-fourth of the children in the entire country had access to education (Wilder, 1972). Yang Dao (1975) estimated that by 1969 there were approximately 10,000 Hmong students in 100 village schools staffed by 450 teachers, mainly Hmong. Ironically, in later years, though the war limited Hmong children's opportunities for schooling in areas of heavy fighting, in the area south of the Plain of Jars more Hmong children than the national average were attending school, because the military often acted as teachers in ad hoc schools in these areas.

In general, boys in a family were given first priority in schooling; a very small minority of girls attended school. Though schools became somewhat more accessible in the years between World War II and the 1970s, there was a very high dropout rate as Hmong children became older, had to travel farther to school and to take on more responsibility for the labor intensive traditional farms. Also, all schools were taught in Lao, adding an additional barrier to success in schooling (Yang, 1975). By 1971, 340 Hmong students were enrolled in the higher public and private schools in Vientiane. At this time, a tiny handful of Hmong (37) were enrolled in universities throughout the world, mainly in France.

In surveys conducted among Hmong who are currently living in the United States, the profile of education in Laos has been clearly drawn. In the Study of Refugee English Language Training (SRELT) survey of Hmong families in four cities conducted in the spring of 1982 (Reder & Cohn, 1984), the average education for Hmong over 18 was found to be very low--1.3 years.

The table below, from Reder's 1981 survey of a West Coast Hmong community, shows the percentage of Hmong who received some education in Laos (Reder, 1982). The trend in education emerges clearly: Women at all ages had less education than men and younger people were more likely to have had some education in Laos, with the exception of the 12-14 age group who most likely had spent their school-age years in refugee camps. This same survey showed that 73.1% of adults had had no schooling at all in Laos; 85.6% had less than 3 years.

Table 1

PERCENT WHO RECEIVED SOME EDUCATION IN LAOS

<u>Age</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>All</u>
12-14	10	34	22
15-19	13	66	41
20-24	17	64	41
25-29	7	66	37
30-34	7	50	31
35-39	0	44	22
40-44	0	21	10
45-49	3	15	7
50 and up	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>
ALL	8	46	27

Literacy. The Hmong of Laos had no system to write their own language until the early 1950s. Hmong passed on cultural knowledge through their strong oral traditions. Missionaries working in Laos in the 1950s devised an alphabet known as the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) for writing Hmong. The RPA was easy to learn; it soon became a vehicle for correspondence between the young men and boys who went away to school and family and friends back home. People who became literate in the RPA were usually self-taught from primers or learned from friends and relatives (Reder, Green & Sweeney, 1983; Yang, 1975).

During the 1960s, the RPA gradually gained wide acceptance for news bulletins in Hmong and for recording Hmong oral literature and history. In 1968, missionaries created another Hmong writing system based on Lao script which, though more politically acceptable to the Royal Lao Government, met with some resistance among people already using the RPA. Later, the Pathet Lao (Neo Lao Haksat) designed yet another Lao-based script used to teach Hmong students in areas under Pathet Lao control. Use of the various scripts was closely tied to political considerations, including the Lao government's concern for maintaining a unified Laos and

exerting control over the numerous ethnic minorities in the country (see Barney, 1967; Center for Applied Linguistics, National Indochinese Clearinghouse, 1978). Another distinct script was developed and used by the Chao Fa (Lao for "Lord of the Sky") movement, originally a messianic cult which evolved into a nativistic movement dedicated to preserving traditional Hmong customs and cultural values (Smalley, personal communication).

Though Hmong literacy continued to spread informally, reading and writing were usually done in Lao because it was the official language and the language in which students were taught and records kept. Because of the limited access to schooling, only a few Hmong were literate in Lao as late as the 1970s. In isolated villages far from any schools the written word was unknown. Ten percent of a small but random sample of household heads (20 households) interviewed as part of a study of adult functional literacy had never seen use of reading or writing by 1970 (Reder, Green & Sweeney, 1983). In the relocation centers formed during the war in Laos and in the refugee camps, both of which are discussed in greater detail below, the Hmong gained more access to Hmong literacy. Still, most Hmong adults could not read or write upon their arrival in the United States. The Study of Refugee English Language Training survey referenced above shows only 39% of adults literate in any language. A similar survey conducted in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota (Olney, 1983) found 58% of adults literate in Hmong and/or Lao.

Bilingualism. Although the Hmong in Laos had limited access to education, many individuals nonetheless were exposed to and learned to speak other languages. The most commonly spoken second language was Lao, but Hmong presently living in the United States report that Chinese, Lao

Theung and Mien were known in some villages and, later, French, English, Thai and Tai Dam were spoken by some Hmong in the larger settlements. Men were more likely than women to speak other languages, since they had more exposure to education, trade and travel outside the village (Reder, Green & Sweeney, 1983). The SRELT study found 62% of Hmong polled could speak a second language other than English.

Development and Westernization

Although there had been some prior contact with Europeans and other groups through trade and missionary activity in Laos, Hmong contacts with the West primarily developed during the French colonial period, from 1882-1949. Patterns of rule during the French administration were generally compatible with local custom in Laos (Whitaker et al., 1972), but the French nevertheless tightly controlled fiscal administration. Under this administration, the Hmong (along with others) had to pay taxes. In 1919-1921, a Hmong rebellion against the French, sometimes called the "Guerre du Fou," took place. The cause of this uprising has been subject to various historical interpretations, but after the rebellion the French government of Indochina decided to grant Hmong special administrative status (Yang, 1975).

During the French administration the Hmong began taking a limited part in political activities at a national level. The Hmong were alone among the non-Lao ethnic groups in having a provincial chief to represent their interests at the provincial level. The Hmong were represented in the constitutional convention as the French turned over power to an independent Laos.

After World War II, the Hmong gradually emerged from their centuries of isolation and conservatism (Yang, 1975). In mountain areas, local markets were beginning to flourish, and Hmong trade was expanding, bringing new goods and contacts. With growing population pressures and dwindling land resources, more Hmong had begun settling in lowland areas, having some success at wetland rice cultivation. More Hmong were adopting modern life patterns, entering schools, trades and the civil service. As the transportation, communication and education infrastructure were gradually improved, Hmong development proceeded slowly, but apparently steadily (Vang, n.d.; Yang, 1975).

The civil wars in Laos and the Vietnam War from 1954 to 1975 brought a halt to any gradual development process. Except for the most mountainous areas in the western part of the country, most of Laos was pulled out of its isolation into the rapid pace of modern war.

War in Laos. In 1950, the communist Free Lao Front was formed in Viet Minh-held territory in Vietnam. Its military force, the Pathet Lao (known since 1965 as the Lao Peoples Liberation Army), entered Laos in 1953 and gained control of the northeastern province of Hao Phan. Until 1953, Hmong had been left in relative peace. At that time, a Hmong faction headed by Faydang established an alliance with the Pathet Lao; another faction headed by Touby Lyfong allied with the Royal Lao Government (Lee, 1982).

From 1954 until 1974, the Hmong factions retained their respective alliances. Two major international conferences attempted to restore peace to the region. The first was the Geneva Conference of 1954, which resulted in a brief, uneasy period of peace from 1957 to 1958 under the coalition Government of the National Union (Whitaker et al., 1972).

Fighting broke out again in 1959, and in 1960 the domestic picture was again radically changed by the introduction of a third political force--the neutralists. A military coup headed by Kong Le demanded that all parties get together and establish Laos as a neutral state. At the end of 1960, Kong Le was driven out of Vientiane by rightist opposition led by Phoumi Nosavan; Touby and his followers joined this group. When the neutralist forces were driven from Vientiane and attempted to retreat across the Plain of Jars, a Hmong major named Vang Pao was one of the few officers of the Royal Lao Army who attempted to block the retreat, though his handful of forces was unable to hold back the neutralist forces. Vang Pao and followers withdrew to Padong. In 1961 they were contacted by American military advisors to set up a defense line against neutralist and Pathet Lao officers in Xieng Khouang (Lee, 1982). Some Hmong were recruited by the Pathet Lao (approximately 20% of Hmong fighting in Laos), but a far greater number of Hmong soldiers eventually joined forces with Vang Pao, whose position was strengthened by direct aid from the CIA.

The second Geneva Conference of 1962 resulted in a thirteen-nation guarantee of Laotian neutrality (Whitaker et al., 1972), and a new coalition government was formed in 1962. However, fighting flared up anew. Meanwhile, the expanding Vietnamese war brought increased use of Laotian territory for the movement of troops and supplies. The United States aided the Royal Lao Government with massive material and air support. By 1971, Royal Government forces held about one-third of national territory; the Pathet Lao held about two-thirds (Whitaker et al., 1972). Two-thirds of the population, now including tens of thousands of refugees, were living in the Royal Government area.

The cease fire agreement of 1973 between the Pathet Lao and the Royal Lao Government signaled a progressive American withdrawal from Laos, and, indeed, Indochina. On June 26, 1975, the United States finally closed its aid mission in Vientiane and with it a ten-year effort to sustain the war and economy in Laos. At the end of the year, on December 3, the Pathet Lao abolished the coalition government and assumed total control of the Lao government.

Impact of the War on the Hmong

Changes in Traditional Lifestyle--The Hmong as Refugees and Soldiers

New migrations: The Hmong as refugees. Especially among those Hmong located in the northeastern provinces of Laos, the coming of a new round of wars added mass refugee migrations to the traditional migration patterns. Each year, until the massive exodus of Hmong into Thailand beginning in 1975, more and more Hmong became refugees in their own land, deprived by war of their villages and fields. The first major movement of this type began as early as 1954, after the signing of the Geneva agreements, when people started moving southward out of the northernmost provinces. In 1956 a small settlement program was established in Xieng Khouang, with aid from U.S. volunteer organizations, and in 1959 the U.S. economic mission in Vientiane established a refugee office to assist the Lao government in providing relief to approximately 40,000 refugees. By 1960, after the hostilities following the Kong Le coup d'etat, the refugees inside Laos, again mainly Hmong, increased to 90,000. More persons were displaced as a result of the occupation of the Plain of Jars

in 1961 and 1962. From 1964-1968 the number of refugees receiving assistance in Laos appeared static at about 125,000 (Whitaker et al., 1972). Late in 1967 and 1968, military action in Laos intensified, and much of the traditional economy was destroyed:

By October 1968 the total number of refugees stood at about 128,000, of whom the largest numbers were the Meo [Hmong] whose men formed the forward defense screen in northeast Laos and whose families had to be cared for by the Royal Lao Government, supported by the United States.

In 1971 there remained approximately 100,000 Meo [Hmong] and members of other hill tribes who were in temporary relocation sites, where they depended on rice dropped from the air for their food supply. For almost 18 years these people had been caught in the offensives and counteroffensives of the conflict that has divided their country. They [the battles] had stripped the mountains of their game, their livestock had disappeared, and they could no longer practice their traditional patterns of slash-and-burn agriculture, which depended on their access to mountains and their freedom to move from hillside to hillside. In many cases the rice drop was the only source of food. In 1971, depending on weather or the presence of the Lao People's Liberation Army, aircraft continued to drop approximately 50 tons of rice each day at 120 drop sites (Whitaker et al., 1972, pp. 93-95).

Not all of the Hmong were involved in these refugee movements; many villages in western Laos were not directly involved in the war. But by 1971, about a third of the Hmong in Laos had fled from battle (Abrams, 1971). By 1973, the Hmong formed 32% of the 370,000 refugees on government support in Laos--the Laotian ethnic group most affected by the war (Lee, 1982). Refugees went to stay with relatives in areas farther from the battlefield or gathered in large refugee and military centers in Long Cheng and Sam Thong. These mass movements tremendously altered the Hmong traditional lifestyle. Besides the high casualties suffered by Hmong soldiers, discussed below, the Hmong were deprived of their livelihood, their valued independence and self-sufficiency--forced to live on gifts of food from the sky.

In the new centers, more Hmong were gathered in one area than at any time in their previous history. For the first time, Hmong had easy opportunity to meet other Hmong outside their small village and clan groups; new access to salaried jobs in the military centers forever ended the old barter economy (Yang, 1975).

A young man about 26 years old now living in the United States described the movements of people and the terror of the slowly encroaching war:

I went to the war in about 1972, I'm not sure. About then. At that time the war was still far from our village. At that time, you could not even hear the sound of the fighting. And as the time went on, you began to hear it louder and louder and louder until it got to your village. I was scared, I was scared. I was so scared when I was young and I heard all the fighting and bombs.

Hmong people really didn't want to escape very far, they just wanted to escape from the fighting and to be living away from the fight. And they didn't really move very far, until the communists came closer and closer and they moved farther and farther and farther until 1971 or 1972. That year a lot of the Hmong refugees came to our village. And it became kind of like a small city, a small town. In fact, before that in my village . . . we didn't have White Hmong and I did not know that White Hmong existed until the war and we found that there were White Hmong and they spoke a different dialect and we laughed when they talked.

The Hmong and military engagement: "The Promise." Early in the American involvement (1960 and 1961) in Laos during the Vietnam War, Hmong soldiers began fighting as American allies. CIA personnel approached the Hmong for their help in the "secret war." These Americans offered supplies and arms to the Hmong to fight for their country. Lee (1982) maintains that Hmong men joined the CIA special army of more than 10,000 men under the leadership of General Vang Pao "because of the salaries offered and lack of employment opportunities in other fields" (p. 203). Ajchenbaum and Hassoun (1977) maintain that Hmong chose to fight for the CIA to consolidate their political

status in Laos, since their previous experience with the French had brought them some recognition in a country where they were traditionally looked down upon by the ethnic Lao elite.

Whatever the motives, and they are complex, thousands of Hmong eventually joined the military. During the present Study, countless individuals told of the "Promise" that the American "CIA" personnel had given them if they fought with the Americans. Though there are several versions of the "Promise," there can be no doubt that assurances were made to support the Hmong during the war, and to provide assistance in the event Laos was lost to the communists. Hmong now living in the United States remember the promise. Many who feel that it has not been kept--the loss of eligibility for refugee cash and medical assistance many individuals experienced after regulations changed is a frequently mentioned example--feel betrayed.

Former Hmong soldiers can itemize the dates and places that American promises of help were made to them and name the "CIA" officials who delivered them. The substance of the promise and Hmong feelings about it are best outlined by the Hmong themselves. An elderly clan leader, highly respected and reportedly one of the first Hmong contacted by the CIA in Laos, told of his first contacts with Americans. Later, he brought out pictures to show of the Americans he worked with in Laos. This is his account:

In 1960, five Americans came from the CIA and had us sign documents. We couldn't write, so we put our handprints on it instead. It said: "You help us, you hide us. We will fight the communists and if we lose and you don't have anywhere to go, we will give you a radio, a saw, an axe so you can cut trees and live in the forest. If you go into the jungle, we'll drop rice." I was involved in this for ten years.

When General Vang Pao left, some of us who were fighting didn't know he had left and that the communists had already taken over the country. We resisted for four years after Vang Pao left. Because we had been the Americans' feet and arms, we must resist and find a way out. Then we came to Thailand and then a third country.

Another soldier related his understanding of the promise:

The Americans in Laos had an agreement, a contract with us: "You help us fight for your country, and if you can't win, we will take you with us and we will help you live." Now the country has fallen and now we come to this country. We have not found jobs yet, and the government cuts help. It is very difficult for those who don't speak English or have no skills. Have they forgotten what they promised? This is true about the contract. I have read it. I was a teacher in Laos, they gave the paper to every teacher. Vang Pao signed it. It said, you fight and if we don't win we'll take you with us. I think that the American people did not keep their word, they lied. They said, "We will help you." Some Hmong people can learn and make a living, but what about those people who have no skills and no money at all. The American people who went to Laos, they just wanted to play a role, a game, they really didn't want to protect our country. They just wanted to sell American products. They say they have forgotten what they have signed. If the American people really wanted to help, they would not have fallen to the communists. All those Hmong people fought and died for it and they thought they were going to get their country back. All my friends and cousins died because they fought. I think about going back to Laos. Sometimes I want to go back. I left all my property--I had a lot of cattle, and my own land. It's not like I didn't have anything there. I left my house, my farm, my cows, all valuable things back in Laos.

Hmong suffered very high casualties in the fighting in Laos.

Estimates vary, but at the end of the conflict in 1975, about 12,000

Hmong soldiers had lost their lives in battle (Lee, 1982)--casualty rates ten times higher than for Americans fighting in the Vietnam War. As casualties mounted to their worst in 1971 and 1972, younger and younger men were recruited to serve. In May of 1975, when the Americans finally withdrew from Southeast Asia, Vang Pao also left Laos. The Hmong who had been fighting with the Americans feared for their lives, and many decided to leave the country. Some Hmong remained behind to resist or hold on to what they could salvage of their traditional way of life. A Hmong former soldier, himself recruited to fight at the age of 15, related the

experiences of his last weeks in Laos:

It was very bad. General Vang Pao had requested some airplanes to help his high officers and we were in the battle and we never knew until we came back and everyone was gone. I think that everyone felt that it was the end. You just heard people talking to each other, forming different groups and discussing and nothing's solved. You go to this group, and hear different news--you go to the other group and they have different news and everyone's sad. Very, very sad and just--I think everyone felt that it was just the end of life. Even myself I just felt like that. People kept saying, 'Eat what you have because this is the last time for eating.' It was very serious. I don't have enough English to explain how I felt at that period of time. It was horrible.

I walked back to Long Cheng and then I walked back to my family. People started to leave Long Cheng. Hundreds and hundreds were moving and some people believed that they could stay, and they still bought a lot of animals and chairs and new houses. It was crazy at that time.

Changes in Leadership

Several developments took place during the period of the Hmong's protracted involvement in the war, developments which triggered significant changes in political leadership and decision-making processes. The changes involved adding new types of leaders to Hmong society, quite distinct from the traditional, kin-based leadership described above. The new leadership arrangements functioned to help Hmong to deal with new types of situations: the emergence of a small cadre of well-educated Hmong youth; the formation of large Hmong enclaves in areas of Laos not heavily engaged in fighting, populated by many thousands of Hmong fleeing villages in the war zones; and the establishment of a large, dispersed Hmong army, led by a formal hierarchy of Hmong officers. Each of these developments had a profound impact not only on Hmong leadership patterns in Laos during this period, but also, as will be discussed below, on Hmong leadership patterns which developed

during resettlement in both the refugee camps in Thailand and later in third countries such as the United States and France.

A small cadre of well-educated Hmong youth. As noted above, a small cadre of Hmong youth progressed through the educational system of Laos to the point where they were sent to Vientiane for some secondary education. The broad contacts that this select group had with Western schooling, culture and institutions endowed its young members with specialized skills and knowledge that prepared them for special roles as interpreters and go-betweens for Hmong interactions with Western agencies and individuals in Thailand and third settlement countries. The fact that relatively few young boys had been selected by their families to be educated in this way--often at great expense to the families--heightened the already high degree of commitment and dedication these youngsters had towards helping their Hmong kinsmen adapt to the new environments they later encountered in Thailand and third countries. These students organized themselves in Vientiane for mutual friendship, assistance with educational problems, and social activities. The Vientiane students formed a non-traditional organization for these purposes, which elected its leaders on a non-kin basis (Smalley, personal communication). With their relatively high degree of education and knowledge of urban life, familiarity with bureaucratic institutions and the Thai and English languages, and with their experience working closely together across kin lines to solve problems, many of these students were thus prepared and committed to later function as a new type of Hmong "leader" in the Thailand camps and third countries such as the United States. Although these roles are highly visible in interactions between the Hmong and their new host countries, in general they do not replace the traditional

leadership structure, which, as will be seen below, continues to function in regulating the internal affairs of the Hmong resettlement communities.

The formation of large Hmong enclaves. As the war continued to drive large numbers of Hmong out of their villages and traditional highland environments, thousands of Hmong refugees were created inside Laos. Hmong from war-torn areas increasingly moved into resettlement areas, either areas better protected by military garrisons (such as Long Cheng in southern Xieng Khouang province) or areas remote from military action altogether (such as in Sayaboury province). In some cases, Hmong simply formed new villages in these areas and continued life in much the same way. In other instances, however, Hmong civilians progressively clustered into resettlement enclaves in existing large towns or even built new towns for these purposes.

In these enclaves, where Hmong inhabitants numbered in the several thousands, new residence and leadership patterns necessarily emerged, patterns which appeared again later in the large enclaves formed in Thailand and the United States. Not only were individuals from numerous Hmong villages living together for the first time, conglomerating lineage groups and clans who had no previous experience living in proximity with each other, but peoples from many different ethnic groups were also combined in these settlements. Hmong, Mien, Lao, Khmu, and diverse other ethnic groups typically lived together in these enclaves.

The greatly increased population density and social diversity of these large enclaves, compared to traditional Hmong villages, were of course accompanied by changes in many aspects of life for the Hmong residents. Although much of the traditional social structure and leadership patterns of Hmong villages were maintained among the villagers

living together in the enclaves, a larger corporate organization was needed for the settlement as a whole. The military tended to provide this structure. In some enclaves that were predominantly Hmong, existing Hmong leaders such as the Tasseng (supervisors of village chiefs) provided the links to such military leaders. In some enclaves, Hmong military officers provided such corporate leadership directly. High-ranking officers from each clan became clan leaders, whose influence and power gradually overshadowed that of village leadership as the large Hmong settlements grew and village ties diminished. (See Thao, 1982.)

Hmong military leadership. The Hmong army, led by General Vang Pao, had a well-defined leadership structure of Hmong officers throughout Laos. This leadership structure served to link together Hmong villages (which often had few if any traditional ties) throughout Laos for military action, for protection and for provision of food and medical supplies in war zones. As noted above, the military was also in charge of overall governance of larger Hmong enclaves in resettlement areas. The widespread recruitment of Hmong youth into the army further served to extend the influence of this organization throughout the country. The military thus provided an infrastructure for the overall leadership of Hmong in Laos, as well as a cadre of officers whose often close contacts with American counterparts offered opportunities for becoming familiar with American culture, language and institutions. As mentioned above, these Hmong officers were among the first to flee Laos for Thailand, further enhancing their ability to provide continuing leadership in the refugee camps. As military officers who fought with the Americans, they also were given the highest priority for entering the United States, which helped maintain their visibility and leadership potential for the Hmong later settling in the United States.

Other Effects of War

Less access to education. A more hidden effect of the long years of war was the loss of educational opportunity among young Hmong. Flight and relocation meant disrupting or completely discontinuing the education young people were only beginning to acquire in their villages. Furthermore, as casualties decimated Hmong forces, young men lucky enough to be in school were drafted out of school at the age of 14 or 15. A whole generation of young Hmong thus lost many opportunities for obtaining the education that was so highly valued.

Psychological and physical effects. The war left indelible marks on the Hmong, scars that have traveled with them out of Laos to the camps and to America. Besides the psychological trauma of loss and separation from homeland and family, many soldiers and some civilians were permanently disabled and are now unable to work. Many individuals wrote letters to this Study about their injuries. (Copies of these can be found in the Fresno Site Report.) Two examples are:

May 3, 1962, I joined the Army as a soldier in District 13A for six months. The communist soldiers bombed us and I was wounded in my head. Now I am dumb--I cannot learn English and speak it. I lost my brain like right now. Until May 15, 1975, the American people allowed our leaders, General Vang Pao, to escape to Thailand. Then we had to escape too. Because if we stayed, the communist soldiers would kill us. Therefore we escaped to Thailand. Now we are in America. I came on July 22, 1982. I am requesting the United Nations to do something to help my family and myself to not starve because I have a damaged mind now.

* * *

I was involved to be an American soldier since 1961 until 1975. Unluckily, in 1973 communist forces had invaded our village, Nam Hio, city of Moung Mouk, and my wife was shot and became handicapped at this battle. She cannot work any more. Please help me to report my case to the government. At present, she can only stay home.

In addition to war injuries incurred by soldiers, certain populations caught in the conflict were also affected. Injuries and long months of malnourishment took their toll on virtually all of the Hmong in Laos. Reports of retaliatory gassing and chemical poisoning of fleeing Hmong or Hmong remaining in Laos until 1980 (see Hamilton-Merritt, 1980) are too numerous to be ignored. The extent of the impact on Hmong of the widely feared "yellow rain," a type of chemical weapon, are still unknown.

Fear of retaliation by communist forces because of the Hmong association with Americans and loss of their homeland and livelihood forced tens of thousands of Hmong to flee Laos. The Hmong exodus was heralded by the departure of General Vang Pao from his headquarters in Long Cheng. Vang Pao, along with his top Hmong officers and their families--perhaps 3,000 in all--were airlifted out to Thailand (Yang, 1982). Most of the others were not as lucky--those who escaped either paid life savings to be transported by car to border areas and across the Mekong, or walked for weeks or months through the jungles, sleeping by day and traveling by night. Thousands of Hmong who had survived the long years of war in Laos lost their lives in flight, some through exposure, others through drowning, others from disease. Though estimates vary widely, it is clear that less than one-third of the original Hmong population of Laos remains there today.

Camps in Thailand

Settlement Pattern

Those Hmong who successfully escaped from Laos after 1975 waited in refugee camps in Thailand for resettlement to third countries; some had hopes of returning to Laos. Hmong refugee camps, principally Ban Vinai,

Nam Yao, Nong Kai and Loei, represented by far the largest settlements of Hmong in history. In Ban Vinai alone, nearly 40,000 Hmong were gathered by 1980 (Hamilton-Merritt, 1980). Hmong waited from a few months to as many as 5 years to be accepted by third countries. By 1979, of 40,000 Hmong in the camps, 12,090 had already been there 4 years (Pringle, 1979). A CBS report of March 4, 1981, reported 50,000 Hmong still in camps. At the end of February 1983, the Ban Vinai population alone stood at nearly 34,000 (Burrows, 1983).

Table 2 shows the annual arrivals of hilltribe refugees from Laos into refugee camps in Thailand, based on official figures of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR, 1983). Although these figures include hilltribes other than Hmong, almost all are, in fact, Hmong. By May 31, 1983, 110,512 hilltribe refugees had fled Laos for Thailand.

Table 2

LAOTIAN HILLTRIBE MOVEMENT TO THAILAND

1975	44,659
1976	7,266
1977	3,873
1978	8,013
1979	23,943
1980	14,801
1981	4,356
1982	1,816
1983 (May)	<u>1,785</u>
Total	110,512

During the long wait in the refugee camps, conditions were poor.

Shaplen (1977) described this visit to a Hmong camp in Thailand in 1977:

Some of them, particularly the Meo [Hmong] ones, were badly overcrowded, and in a single thatched hut or a single section of a tin-roofed longhouse a score of men, women, and children, making up two or three families from the same clan, were living in areas about

ten feet square, amid scattered piles of personal belongings. They cooked collectively over two or three charcoal pots; slept in shifts, as best they could; suffered from a general scarcity of water and sanitary facilities. The Cambodians, Lao, and Vietnamese were accustomed to the summer heat, but the Meo mountain people were miserable in it and spent the long, sun-soaked days fanning themselves, in a virtual torpor. More than half of all the refugees--and particularly the children--had skin diseases and were weakened by malaria and stomach disorders, though the Thais and the relief agencies were doing what they could to bring medical supplies into the camps and set up small clinics.

Informants during the present Study told of similarly poor safety and health conditions. One Hmong man reported that his decision to leave Thailand in 1976 and come to the United States rather than try to go back to Laos and rejoin his parents and siblings was based on his fear of staying in the camps, where disease was so prevalent that every day, all day long, the traditional Hmong death drums could be heard from all corners of the camp.

Economic Changes

In the camps, the years of dependence--which had begun for many inside Laos at the outset of the war--continued. A few people had access to cash through silversmithing, selling handwork, and working with permission in nearby forests or tobacco farms, and some had tiny vegetable gardens. But for the most part, the Hmong in the camps were dependent on the often inadequate food and supplies provided by international relief agencies. As more and more Hmong moved on to resettle in third countries, money sent back to the camps by relatives overseas became an increasingly important source of income.

Access to Literacy and Education

Access to Hmong literacy increased as previously isolated Hmong met others who could lend them the precious Hmong primers or teach them to read. In fact, various Hmong scripts flourished in the new environment. A few Hmong, mostly men, received some English language training in the camps: The Study of Refugee English Language Training (Reder & Cohn, 1984) found that only 5% of the Hmong adults who entered the U.S. between July 1979 and July 1981 received some English training in the camps, a smaller percentage than for the Vietnamese and Cambodians surveyed. There were few formal schools for children to begin or continue their education, and many students had to wait for their resettlement to third countries to begin or recommence their education. Those children who went to the camp schools were obligatorily instructed in the Thai system and language, rather than in languages of potential third countries, English or French. Some informal English as a Second Language (ESL) and literacy instruction was provided for both children and adults by knowledgeable Hmong adolescents and young adults. Later, some ESL programs were organized by missionary organizations. Cultural orientation and ESL instruction for Hmong adults was gradually introduced by U.S. State Department programs in the Ban Vinai camp.

Further Leadership Changes

The three previously described factors stimulating change in Hmong leadership patterns--the small, highly educated cadre of Hmong youth, the formation of large enclaves and the military leadership--continued to exert influence on Hmong leadership and decision-making patterns as Hmong increasingly moved into the camps in Thailand.

Although the specific details have not been adequately described, some of the residential and leadership features of the Hmong refugee enclaves in Laos appear to have been reinstated in the larger Hmong camps in Thailand. The Hmong enclaves were under the over-arching authority of a Hmong camp commander (a former Hmong military officer) who reported to a Thai commander. The large camps were divided hierarchically into geographical units within the camp. Leaders of each level elected their representative at the next highest level. This hierarchy was utilized for dissemination and gathering of information, distribution of food and services, assigning labor, and other administrative functions.

Although some elected camp leaders were also traditional Hmong leaders, the camp leadership pattern rarely coincided with traditional patterns because the units of the camp organization generally consisted of families who did not belong to the same lineage group, village, clan, or subclan groupings.

Cross-cutting the camp-wide leadership structure, rooted in earlier military and enclave leadership structures, was the service-oriented leadership provided by the cadre of relatively well educated Hmong youth. With origins in the previously described student organization in Vientiane, youth organizations--cross-cutting both traditional kin groups and camp residential units--were established in both Nam Phong and Ban Vinai camps (Smalley, personal communication). The youth organizations operated under the authority of Hmong camp-wide leadership, providing interpretation, translation, health-related, educational and other vital services.

Cross-cutting both the formal Hmong camp-wide leadership and the youth organizations were the traditional kin-based groups through which

the cultural life of the Hmong continued, despite the loss or separation of relatives during the war and its aftermath. Many relatives had died, others were still in Laos, yet others had resettled in other camps or moved on to third countries. Although many of the cultural and emotional ties among members of kin groups remained intact as resettlement progressed, the fragmentation of close-knit groups through death and separation and the loss of the traditional homeland was already producing deep emotional problems in the Hmong, problems destined to accompany them as they gradually moved on to third countries. The sense of loss, the intense desire to reunify family and lineage groups, the persistent longing for the traditional life, environment and independence they had in the highlands of Laos--all of these feelings surfaced in the camps and continue to play a critical role in subsequent Hmong resettlement in the United States and other third countries.

Resettlement to Third Countries

Hmong waited in refugee camps for permission to enter third countries. Based on meeting the immigration criteria and quotas established by various nations, they waited varying lengths of time. Most who resettled waited at least several years before being able to do so. Table 3 shows UNHCR figures for resettlement of Laotian hilltribe refugees into third countries, year by year. Again, almost all of the figures cited are actually Hmong. In addition, a small number (190) of Hmong had voluntarily repatriated to Laos through May 31, 1983, according to UNHCR figures.

Table 3

LAOTIAN HILLTRIBE MOVEMENT TO THAILAND
AND RESETTLEMENT TO THIRD COUNTRIES

<u>Year</u>	<u>Camp Arrivals</u>	<u>Resettled</u>
1975	44,659	454
1976	7,266	4,593
1977	3,873	2,481
1978	8,013	5,424
1979	23,943	13,328
1980	14,801	28,927
1981	4,356	4,437
1982	1,816	3,003
1983*	<u>1,785</u>	<u>453</u>
Total	110,512	63,100

*through May 31

A complex array of immigration regulations and quotas, varying among resettlement countries as well as over time (particularly in the U.S.) has governed the outflow of Hmong refugees from Thailand to the third countries. Furthermore, the background characteristics of Hmong refugees entering Thailand and thus their priority for emigration--also varied over time. The Hmong also exhibited a mixture of motivations and preferences for resettlement to third countries. Thus a very complex set of "push" and "pull" forces has governed Hmong emigration from Thailand to third countries. The net result of these diverse factors is shown in Table 4, in which the UNHCR figures for the cumulative resettlement of Laotian hilltribes into the various third countries are reported (again, most of the figures are Hmong).

Table 4

LAOTIAN HILLTRIBE RESETTLEMENT TO OTHER COUNTRIES
(August 1983)

United States	53,250
France	6,564
French Guyana	1,413
Canada	806
Australia	317
Argentina	222
Other	<u>289</u>
Total	63,561

Clearly, Hmong have resettled primarily in the United States. For Hmong wishing to come to the United States, the preference criteria and applicable quotas have varied over time. Individuals seeking entry into the U.S. were interviewed in camps to determine their place in the system of priorities. Refugees who had worked for or had been closely associated with the U.S. or had served in the military were given higher priority. Higher priority was also given refugees who had close relatives living in the United States, so that as increasing numbers of Hmong entered the U.S., their close relatives still in camps received higher priority.

Another constraint on Hmong resettlement in the U.S. has been the quota for refugees. When Southeast Asian refugees first started coming to the U.S. in 1975, the refugee quotas were quite low, but were overridden by the Attorney General using statutory emergency authority. On this basis, several hundred Hmong entered the United States, primarily high ranking military officers and their families. Requirements were progressively liberalized in the next couple of years, but the influx of Hmong refugees remained at a low level until 1979-80, when, under the

political pressure from the heart-breaking publicity about conditions facing Vietnamese "boat people," requirements and quotas were sufficiently relaxed to permit nearly any Hmong refugee in Thailand to enter the United States who wished to do so, if a sponsor could be found. Increasing publicity about the refugees' plight stimulated an initial swell of American sponsors. Once the Hmong influx accelerated thereafter, Hmong residents of the U.S. began sponsoring their own relatives in the camps, further accelerating the process. In 1980 alone, approximately 25,000 Hmong came to the United States. (Further data on resettlement in the U.S. will be presented in the next chapter.)

During the height of the Hmong movement to the U.S., relatively few Hmong who wanted to come to the U.S. were prevented from doing so. Although there was some confusion, particularly regarding the desirability of older people (which prompted many to understate their actual--if frequently unknown--age to such an extent that their subsequent eligibility for Social Security benefits in the U.S. was delayed or lost), most who wanted to go found a way to qualify, thanks in part to liberalized immigration criteria, quotas and enforcement policies.

But not all Hmong chose to resettle in the United States--or in any third country for that matter. As noted above, the prospects of yet further fragmentation of already separated extended families by movement to the West, or of further separation from ancestral and spiritual homes in Laos, created too much uncertainty and ambivalence. Reports back from relatives resettled in the United States concerning the difficulties and problems of adjusting to a new and strange environment and economy frightened or discouraged many Hmong from leaving Thailand. Others have remained in Thailand hoping perhaps to someday return to Laos and a

traditional way of life. For whatever reason, some 46,000 Hmong are estimated (using UNHCR figures) to still be in refugee camps in Thailand as of May, 1983. Few have since left, and a large if unknown proportion of those remaining do not wish to leave for the West.

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CHAPTER II

HMONG RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Introduction

This chapter examines briefly the settlement pattern of Hmong in the United States, the country in which most Hmong refugees have resettled. Factors influencing where Hmong were initially placed and why many have continued to migrate within the country following initial placement will be discussed. The present geographical distribution of the Hmong in the United States is described, together with a brief description of projected future growth and mobility of the Hmong population in the United States. Building on this overview, Chapter III will look at how the ongoing Hmong resettlement in the United States appears to be faring and what some of the issues, problems and solutions have been.

The Hmong Population in the United States

The number of Hmong living in the United States as of May 1983 is estimated to be between 60,000 and 65,000. This estimate is based on immigration data, knowledgeable estimates of Hmong informants who have traveled extensively in the country, and data from state refugee offices combined with extrapolations of Hmong birthrates documented in other studies (e.g., Ajchenbaum & Hassoun, 1977; Lemoine, 1972; Reder, 1982; Yang, 1975).

Table 5 displays resettlement counts of Lao hilltribe (or Highland Lao) refugees in the United States by year of entry, as reported in United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) figures. Although the exact number who are Hmong is uncertain, it is nevertheless a very large portion of the total, according to UNHCR, State Department and other knowledgeable informants. The natural rate of increase of the Hmong population through an excess of births over deaths accounts for the larger current figure for the U.S. Hmong population.

Table 5

HILLTRIBE RESETTLEMENT TO THE UNITED STATES

1975	301
1976	3,058
1977	1,655
1978	3,873
1979	11,301
1980	27,242
1981	3,704
1982	2,511
1983 (May)	<u>300</u>
Total	53,950

Resettlement to the United States

The first Hmong to come to the United States actually were not refugees at all but a very select group of high school and college students sent here in the late 1960s and early 1970s to further their education--and perhaps to establish a base for later resettlement in case of an eventual defeat and withdrawal of Hmong forces from Laos. This handful of students were scattered across the United States. They developed close ties with American families who later assisted the

students' families to immigrate and settle in the same areas. In this way, initial refugee resettlement sites and sponsors were "seeded" by these few students.

Hmong refugees began arriving in the United States in late 1975. Although approximately 40,000 Hmong fled Laos for Thailand in 1975, only about 3,000 of these refugees moved on to the United States within the ensuing year, as Tables 2 and 5 above indicate. Those who did tended to be relatively educated, literate and experienced with urban life (Reder, 1982). Many of these "first wave" Hmong refugees entering the U.S. in 1975 and 1976, like their early-arriving counterparts from Vietnam, had had extensive contact with American military and support personnel and were therefore assigned a higher priority for immigration by virtue of regulations in effect at that time.

Like other groups of Southeast Asian refugees, the first Hmong to arrive were generally sponsored by voluntary agencies (VOLAGs), churches and individual American residents. Later, as changes in regulations permitted more Hmong to immigrate to the United States, the Hmong residing in the U.S. began sponsoring their relatives directly. This phenomenon tended to create larger and larger clusters of Hmong and thus isolate newcomers more from the host community. In Portland, Oregon, for example, by the spring of 1981, 86% of the Hmong population had been sponsored by other Hmong families (Reder, 1982); in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, by 1982, 56% had been sponsored by Hmong families (Olney, personal communication).

There were a number of factors involved in this shifting sponsorship pattern. The interest of American families and church groups in sponsoring refugees did not keep up with the rapidly increasing need for sponsors of Hmong (and other Southeast Asian) refugees able to enter the

U.S. following the liberalization of immigration criteria and quotas in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Furthermore, early American sponsorship of Hmong often did not take into account the importance of resettling families belonging to the same lineage and subclan groups in close geographical proximity. Some close relatives, having been separated by the war and its aftermath, had been reunited in the camps and were looking forward to resettling together in the United States. Other close relatives still in Laos or in other camps in Thailand, had to resettle at different times. They, too, longed to rejoin and live with their traditional kinsmen. But too often, the families involved were placed with sponsors independently--often in different cities far apart from each other. This initial placement of families wishing to live together in different cities became, as will be seen below, a major factor underlying the subsequent migration of the Hmong in the United States--a phenomenon referred to as secondary migration.

Thus, to increase the supply of available sponsors, as well as to coordinate extended family reunification with the initial placement of new arrivals, Hmong living in the United States increasingly served as sponsors to other Hmong. Although this shift certainly facilitated some aspects of the resettlement process, to the extent that fewer non-Hmong sponsors were involved, the Hmong communities had correspondingly fewer external resources and support on which to rely.

Present Location of the Hmong

The Hmong in the United States are scattered across the country in over 72 communities in at least 30 different states.* Some of the

*Data on size, location and other characteristics of these 72 communities have been gathered separately by this Study or the ORR Hmong/Highland Lao Workgroup and can be found in Appendices 2 and 3 of this report. Key informants in existing Hmong communities provided the data.

characteristics of these communities are summarized in Tables 6 and 7. Nearly half of the Hmong live in California, for example. Of those, over two-thirds live in the Central San Joaquin Valley. Most of the 72 Hmong communities are quite small. Over 80% have less than 1,000 Hmong residents; half of those have less than 300 Hmong inhabitants. Only two communities at present--Fresno, California, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota--have more than 5,000 Hmong. Communities with 1,500 or more Hmong inhabitants (as of May 1983) are listed in Table 8.

Table 6

HMONG IN THE UNITED STATES

Hmong Outside California	32,000 - 34,000
Hmong in California	28,000 - 30,000
Hmong in Central Valley	20,000 - 22,000
Total	60,000 - 64,000

Table 7

NUMBER OF COMMUNITIES BY SIZE IN THE UNITED STATES

<u>Size</u>	<u>Number</u>
0 - 299	28
301 - 999	28
1,000 - 1,999	6
2,000 - 2,999	4
3,000 - 3,999	2
4,000 - 4,999	2
8,000+	2

Table 8

LARGEST HMONG COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES
(Per ORR Hmong/Highland Lao Workgroup Compilations May, 1983)

<u>Community</u>	<u>Number of Hmong Residents</u>
Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota	8,730
Fresno, California	8,000
Merced, California	4,500
Stockton, California	4,000
Orange County, California	3,000
San Diego, California	3,000
Sacramento, California	2,500
Providence, Rhode Island	2,300
Denver, Colorado	1,500-2,000
Los Angeles, California	1,500

Age, Growth and Structure of the Population

Two features of Hmong demography stand out as having profound implications for the future of the Hmong population: its youth and its exceptionally high birthrate and predicted rapid growth. Also noteworthy is the apparent persistence of traditional family size and residence patterns in the new environment.

Age pyramids of resettled Hmong constructed from available demographic studies in the United States (Olney, 1983; Reder, 1982) and France (Ajchenbaum and Hassoun, 1977) look remarkably similar to those from Laos (e.g., Lemoine, 1972; Yang, 1975). That is, a very large proportion of the Hmong in this country are very young--about 25% of the population is under the age of 5, and 49% is under 15. On the other end of the spectrum, there are fewer older Hmong: Only an estimated 4-5% are over age 60. This age distribution suggests consequences in several important areas of Hmong resettlement, particularly education and employment as they relate to self-sufficiency. In education, school systems in which there are substantial Hmong should expect continued

enrollment of Hmong children, as those under 5 reach school age. Subsequently, a larger, historically unprecedented portion of Hmong will have had some education.

Several estimates of Hmong birthrates are available. All point to a similar figure. In Merced, California, during the summer of 1983, the Merced Sun-Star listed in its vital statistics weekly births in the county. Each week, about five children born to Hmong parents were recorded, out of a Merced Hmong population of approximately 5,000. At this rate, 250 new Hmong should enter Merced each year simply by being born there. This constitutes a birthrate of 50 per thousand population, compared with a 1981 U.S. national birthrate of 15.9 per thousand (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1982). Demographic data from household surveys conducted in 1981 in Portland and 1982 in the Twin Cities of Minnesota indicate a comparably high rate of birth (Reder, 1982; Olney, personal communication).

Hmong young people report that there may be a very slow, barely perceptible trend toward having smaller families among more educated young Hmong. However, the high overall birthrate seems likely to continue. With young marriages still popular and infant mortality expected to be lower here than in Laos, the Hmong family will likely remain large and the population predictably will burgeon.

These figures point clearly to a young and rapidly growing future Hmong population. The possibility of unsolved problems in resettlement being exacerbated as a result of simple population growth should not be overlooked and will be considered later in this report in drawing implications for the education of the Hmong and their economic self-sufficiency.

Settlement Patterns of Hmong in the United States

Initial Placement

The initial settlement pattern of the Hmong was influenced by a number of factors. The location of individual sponsoring American families and agencies was the main determinant. Initial placements in cities such as Minneapolis-St. Paul and Portland reflected the experience those areas and their voluntary agencies had had settling previous immigrant groups. In some other locales--such as Missoula, Montana--the strong advocacy, sponsorship and support provided by key individuals rather than by large agencies resulted in the early placements of Hmong families.

To the extent that such initial placements were not well coordinated with lineage group unification, two kinds of problems tended to occur. First, when families belonging to the same group were not placed together, it created a tendency for the families to relocate to be together. Second, in some communities, the placement of Hmong groups or individuals who did not get along well together often factionalized the local Hmong community; when intra-community tensions rose beyond a certain point, there was a tendency for one of the groups to leave. Both of these factors were also elements of traditional Hmong migration patterns in Laos (Thao, 1982).

Secondary Migration

A variety of factors have contributed to Hmong secondary migration, including: economic betterment, family reunification, interest in farming, access to better training and schools, and warmer climate. These varied motivations represent a mixture of traditional motivations

for Hmong migration (Thao, 1982) and reactions to differences among the characteristics of specific resettlement communities in this country. The interrelationships between motives for moving are subtle; whereas one family might move to access a particular job in another city and another family for better job prospects there, the next families might move in to be with the first two families. Once the process starts, the attraction of family reunification and the desire of the population to live together seem to become an increasingly irresistible force, so that in places like the Central Valley of California, for example, migration continues even in the face of massive unemployment, high welfare dependence and inadequately funded social services. It is important to look carefully at some of these factors.

Family reunification. As discussed in Chapter I, Hmong migration patterns in Laos were shaped by extended family ties. As soil wore out, families were likely to move together, and movement to other villages to consolidate political and family position also occurred. The process of leaving the camps and entering this country often separated lineage groups. With the loss of so many of their numbers in Laos, having nearby close relatives for support in the new country was especially important. In a new and strange environment the strength provided by family helping networks became indispensable. As noted, some families were able to reunite by being sponsored by earlier arriving family members; others moved after they arrived here.

When asked why they move to a new location in the United States, the most common Hmong reply is "to be with family." In the Hmong Community Survey taken in 1982 in Minneapolis-St. Paul, for example, 64% of those who had moved from elsewhere in the United States to Minnesota indicated

that they came because of relatives. Many individuals reported that the reason for moving (or not moving) to another city was to be with their relatives. The following examples from three different Hmong communities are representative:

(1) Fresno, California:

We came here because my relatives who could help me in all matters lived here.

(2) Orange County, California:

We moved here because there was not a job in Las Vegas and also no ESL school for refugees. We had relatives in California who came earlier, so they could help us look for a job or guide us on how to make a living in America.

(3) St. Paul, Minnesota:

I was first sponsored to Ohio. The church helped me. I moved to Minnesota because my father came here from Thailand. My father came to Minnesota because his sister lived here. My father wanted me to come here to help him, so I moved from Columbus. I liked Columbus very much, my sponsor helped me a lot. I used to have a group of relatives here but they all moved to Indiana. They moved because there were other families there and one cousin moved first, the rest followed him. My father and I did not go because my father's sister is still here and my father wanted to be near both his sister and his son. His sister's husband has many relatives here.

As these examples show, family reunification is usually combined with other factors in deciding to move. The decisions about where to move in the first migrations appear to have been conditioned somewhat by the chance of locations of certain influential group leaders who tended to draw others around them, but also by conditions of resettlement in different locations including job and training opportunities and welfare policies. As in traditional moving patterns (Thao, 1982), political considerations have played a certain part in secondary migration patterns in the U.S. as groups and leaders align and realign in various

locations. The general hope of economic betterment has been and remains a major factor in migration. There are many elements to economic betterment, and several environmental conditions contribute to the perception of better or worse prospects in different locales.

Jobs. Word spreads quickly across the country about where jobs for Hmong might be available. The presence of jobs may for non-English speakers to obtain in Orange County, California, from 1979-1981 was a factor in the in-migration to that community. Good jobs have attracted Hmong to Texas, though the movement there has been more controlled. On the other hand, loss of jobs or low wages encourage people to move out of a location: A Hmong welfare worker in Orange County said that most of the Hmong who were laid off in the recent recession moved away. A supply of good, secure jobs, however, may overcome the attraction of being with relatives in other Hmong centers, or of joining massive out-migrations. Many individuals in Portland stayed to keep jobs, even as their relatives left for California:

I have a job here and I don't want to move down there and go on public assistance. The reason all the Hmong people left is that even if they were working they didn't make enough for a big family and don't have medical care for the family.

A man in Orange County who had just been laid off talked about moving:

In Laos, my grandparents never moved before the war. They stayed in the same place. But here, it seems we keep moving around so we can depend on the government. The government must help us stay in one center. It's all right for the Hmong whether they live together in one place or live separately, as long as they stay in the same city. It is best not to move if you have a job. But for myself, if in case I cannot collect unemployment, I would move too, to survive.

A man in Fresno:

I and my group left Portland. Several of the group were working. We came directly from Thailand and got a job right away. We worked 3 or 4 years and made \$3.50-\$4.00 an hour.

When it came time to increase the wage some more, they laid you off. We could not bear the thought of being used like temporary workers, so we had to look for a new opportunity and find new ways to do better, so we moved.

Another man in Fresno:

There are nine members in my family. When I first came, welfare was about \$600 a month. In the company, I earned \$4.00 an hour. So I earned \$600 or so at work. Of the nine people, two reached 18 and wanted to work. I put my wife's name and my son's name in to work at the company, but they never hired them. I couldn't support my family. I moved to California.

Varying costs of living. The differences in cost of living among various U.S. cities where Hmong live has constituted an impetus for moving. For many Hmong who are faced with supporting large families on low-paying jobs, a small difference in rent might make the difference between self-sufficiency and asking for help from welfare or relatives. In California, where Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) grants are the same throughout the state but housing costs vary, welfare dependent households also feel the pull to move to cheaper areas. The high cost of living was a primary force in the movement out of Orange County and the lower cost of living has been a factor in the movement into the Central Valley of California and to Arkansas. An employed Orange County man said that he was considering moving in state to Merced:

The rents here are too high. My four-bedroom costs \$600 a month, with utilities separate. I earn \$700 a month, plus I get \$100 a month in Food Stamps. I tried to work hard after I got here, but I think due to rent and utilities being so high, I cannot stay off welfare. If I go up there [Merced] and manage my brother's store, I think I will be able to support my family and the rental there is cheaper, too.

The availability of public housing in St. Paul, Minnesota, and low-cost housing in Providence, Rhode Island, seem to have been factors inhibiting massive out-migration from those areas.

Differences in welfare policies. Changes in federal resettlement regulations in the spring of 1982 also gave a major impetus to secondary migration. Prior to the policy change, refugees were eligible for welfare benefits through a federal Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) program for their first 36 months in the country. Although the eligibility criteria and benefit levels in many states were equivalent to those available to the general public, in some states certain categories of refugee households could qualify under the RCA program but not under the state's general welfare criteria. In particular, states differed in whether they extended AFDC to two-parent households in which both parents were present but unemployed (AFDC-U). In states that did not extend AFDC benefits to such two-parent families, e.g., Oregon and Washington, intact refugee families could nevertheless qualify for comparable cash and medical assistance as long as they were time-eligible for the federal RCA program. But when the regulations changed the time-eligible period from 36 to 18 months, many unemployed, intact refugee households suddenly found themselves without financial support or medical assistance. In states like Oregon and Washington, where a deepening recession was occurring at the same time, such families could not find jobs. The lure of nearby California, which had an AFDC-U program, was irresistible to many facing a future without visible means of support. Thousands of Hmong left the Northwest for California in the months just before and after the cutback.

Education and training. The actual or rumored availability of better or more ESL training, vocational training and higher education have also been major factors in Hmong movements. The quickly spreading news that Minnesota had good ESL training and accessible vocational training drew a

large gathering of Hmong to the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The Hmong Community Survey taken there in 1982 indicates that after the most frequent reason, moving to be with "relatives" (64%), 22% of relocated Hmong in the area came there because of "school," compared to 6% for jobs (Olney, 1983). Rumors that more education was available in California attracted people to that state. The training and educational opportunities people had heard about were found in Los Angeles and Orange County. A man in Portland said: "In California you can live on welfare and go to school or training too, not like in Portland. In Portland, you never find vocational training like in California."

A small migration is taking place among young people who are too old to go to high school in some places; they move to other places, stay with relatives and take advantage of policies which allow older students in school. For example, in Oregon students may attend high school until they reach 21; in California, however, if they will not graduate by their 19th birthday, they cannot continue in high school beyond that time. Some young people whose families moved to California have returned to Oregon to live with friends or relatives while they complete high school. More will be said about this migration in Chapter III.

The hope of farming. A relatively small number of families in the Central Valley of California have succeeded in farming endeavors so far. News of the first few families that started farms and did quite well rapidly spread to Hmong all over the country. This news fell upon the receptive ears of Hmong who had discovered that poor English and lack of industrial skills limited their employment opportunities. People began looking at what they had had success with in the past: farming. In the Central Valley of California, as well as in Minnesota and Arkansas, the

hope of farming has attracted Hmong secondary migrants. The possibility of farming as a livelihood is discussed in Chapter III of this report. Some Hmong farming projects are presented in the Hmong Resettlement Final Report, Volume 2.

Interrelated motivations. The factors contributing to secondary migration are not simple and are interrelated in various ways. Some of the many factors contributing to secondary migration were described by Hmong who have moved:

I moved here (Fresno) for many reasons: It is very cold in St. Paul, Minnesota, it made my family sick. And with the cold climate we could not do anything. Everyone lived like prisoners in jail. We could not find jobs if we did not speak English in Minnesota. We were all on welfare. We heard that down here it is easier to get a job, or create our own employment as farmers. We came here, because my relative who could help me in all matters in my family lived here.

* * *

There were not refugee programs everywhere for the Hmong, for example: 10 to 20 families settled in Utah and there was no school or ESL program for them. When they first arrived, their sponsors found them jobs but later employers laid them off. No one else could find them a job or find school for them to learn. Because the government offered school where there were too many Hmong, that's why everyone keeps coming no matter how difficult earning a living is.

* * *

I went to seek a job in the city of San Diego for 9 months and could not find a job; then I decided to move to Portland, Oregon. I had been working there for 2 years, but my family is so big that I could not support them enough. I went to apply for welfare for additional assistance, such as more money and medical care, but they could not help me either. As a result I decided to quit working and moved to Fresno for more English classes to attend. When I speak the language better I will try to look for another job.

* * *

In 1978 I arrived in America in the state of Utah, city of Fillmore. There was no assistance program there to assist me at

all. No house to live in. I had to stay with a relative. I have worked for 2 years in Utah. I had a very difficult time facing the language problem. No speaking, talking; I did not know where to go. I decided to move to the city of Fresno, California, hoping for an English class to help us to improve the language for the family for a better future in the country of America.

* * *

Since I came to this country in 1979, I was in Nashville, Tennessee. They didn't have any money program that would help my family, not even a school program that would help adults to learn. So I just worked and never learned English.

* * *

People came here [to Fresno] to see if they could work on the farm. But we got here with very little money, and the [welfare] regulations made us think it's not worth it. We only go to school and see and wait.

Several interesting points are illustrated in these examples. First, in addition to those who moved for immediate economic betterment (i.e., to avail themselves of public assistance or jobs), others moved in order to gain English or vocational training in hope of a better future for themselves and their families. Hope for the future seems to be an essential ingredient in Hmong resettlement. Even some individuals who were working traded jobs or employment opportunities for access to English language or vocational training. Consider this example from the Orange County Hmong community: Dang is an unemployed male in his late 40's, with a family of eight. He came to the U.S. in 1976 and settled in Texas. He stayed there until 1979, working in a series of five jobs, starting 2 months after he arrived. Most of these jobs were part-time: First, he did yard work; then he worked in a couple of restaurants; then in a warehouse; and finally in a factory (he operated a machine producing electrical wire). Dang quit his last job and moved to California because he had no ESL program or job training program in Texas. He says he needs hope for a better future.

Secondary Migration into the Central Valley

Although secondary migration has been taking place throughout the period of Hmong resettlement in the United States, its overall character changed abruptly, starting in late 1981 and continuing to the present, when a massive movement took place into the cities and towns of California's Central Valley. In mid-1981, there were virtually no Hmong living in the Central Valley; two years later, over 20,000 Hmong have settled into the valley, almost entirely through secondary migration. Although the Hmong are located in the valley as far north as Sacramento and as far south as Visalia, the primary concentrations have been in the cities of Fresno (over 8,000 Hmong) and Stockton (about 4,000 Hmong) and the small town of Merced (about 5,000 of the town's population of 45,000).

During the late 1970s, a few Hmong families moved into the Fresno area and operated small farms. Word of their "success" spread quickly throughout the Hmong communities being established elsewhere as the massive influx of Hmong came into the U.S. during 1980 and 1981. A few Hmong started migrating into Fresno from other areas of California (chiefly Orange County and San Diego) during this period, attracted by reports of the relatively low cost of living and the feasibility of farming.

Thereafter, Hmong secondary migrants began streaming into Fresno (and nearby Merced) in a fairly continuous manner. Whereas most of the early settlers were drawn to Fresno by the prospects of farming, the later arrivals had a variety of motivations for moving to Fresno. Some continued to come because of farming (even though relatively few families had been able to support themselves through farming and many had failed, the good news seems to have traveled faster and farther). Others were

drawn by the warmer climate of California (particularly Hmong living in Minnesota and the Midwest). Others were attracted by the more generous eligibility requirements and benefit schedules of California's welfare system. Still others came to Fresno from other areas because of the availability of ESL programs (particularly Hmong from Texas and Utah). As the size of the Fresno community steadily grew, many migrated simply for family reunification.

This picture of Hmong settlement in Fresno is borne out by welfare caseload statistics: There were no Hmong receiving public assistance in Fresno County in June 1979. A year later, in July 1980, records indicate a total of 168 Hmong individuals on aid (only four of whom were time-expired); according to local officials, the Hmong started migrating from Southern California in April 1980, but they did not begin showing up in the caseload data until three months later, after their cases had been administratively transferred from welfare offices in sites of primary resettlement. By March 1981, the Hmong caseload consisted of 1,066 individuals. Rapid growth is evident thereafter. Here are the Fresno County Hmong caseloads over time:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Number of Hmong Individuals on Aid</u>
6/79	0
7/80	168
3/81	1,106
3/82	2,192
3/83	5,341

By June of 1983, welfare officials estimated the actual Hmong caseload size to be about 7,000 (although many would not show up in caseload counts until 1-3 months later due to delays in administrative transfer).

As noted earlier, almost all of this growth can be attributed to secondary migration. Welfare statistics indicate about a 60/40 mix of interstate and intrastate transfers into Fresno. Oregon has been the largest source of interstate secondary migrants and Orange County the largest source of intrastate migrants. Group meetings held in Fresno confirm this general picture: About 90% are secondary migrants. Although a wide variety of states are represented, most came from Oregon and many from Orange County.

As the migration into Fresno and other parts of the valley continues, a classic conflict is mounting between the need to avoid the social, political and economic problems resulting from high levels of impact, on one hand, and the right to move wherever one chooses. Neither the desires of resettlement policy-makers nor program planners nor even of Hmong leadership to slow down this migration has been a match thus far to the lure of the Central Valley.

As we have seen, once the process starts, the magnet of family reunification and the desire of the population to live together becomes an increasingly irresistible force, even in the face of massive unemployment, welfare dependence, and inadequately funded social services. Program planners, refugee service providers, other public agencies (particularly schools and hospitals) and community leaders in general face an unhappy dilemma: They can choose to fight the tide, and eventually be overwhelmed by it, or they can try to anticipate it and plan for it. To date, Fresno's Hmong resettlement has been met by a mix of these two strategies.

Decision-making Patterns in Secondary Migration

Almost all Hmong secondary migration has been shaped by the group decision-making of heads of households belonging to a lineage group. In general, moves have either served to reunify separated members of lineage groups or to maintain their current unity. In cases of a mass exodus from one city to another, as in the moves of several groups from Portland to the Central Valley, entire groups actually moved simultaneously, forming a caravan of Hmong migrants driving down the highway. More commonly, a migration "plan" or strategy is devised by a group such that some of its households move to the new destination first, leaving others behind for a period of time. The families going first will try to secure housing, employment and/or establish eligibility for public assistance. The lineage group may be temporarily separated in this way, until the situation of the recent arrivals in the new destination is adequate to facilitate the migration of the remaining families. Often those initially "left behind" are families who are working or have other local ties, maintaining a viable base of housing and employment on both ends of the move. One family said this helped keep a base of support available in case the move did not work out as planned and the group wished to return. Many variations of these strategies for moving a group have operated in Hmong secondary migrations.

In some cases, migration to a new location has been governed primarily by a combination of "pull" factors alone, that is, reasons to move to somewhere; such appeared to be the case, for example, in the early build-up of the Hmong communities in Orange County and the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. In other movements, particularly in the rapid migration into the Central Valley, a

combination of "push" and "pull" factors have operated, that is, specific pressures were encouraging people to leave one area at the same time other factors were "pulling" them into another locale.

Another cross-cutting factor influencing the decision-making process has been the extent to which outside (i.e., non-Hmong) individuals and agencies were involved in the planning and implementation of the migration. In moves into the Central Valley, for example, there has been relatively little external involvement in regulating the inflow of Hmong. However, there are ongoing and contemplated future programs seeking to stabilize Hmong communities outside of California to minimize future in-migration to the Central Valley--ORR's Highland Lao Initiative is a prominent example.

In other instances, public and private resettlement agencies have been actively involved in encouraging the secondary migration of Hmong from one locale to another to improve their economic prospects. The involvement of Montana state and local agencies in prompting some Hmong families to move from Missoula to Billings is an example.

In still other cases, there is effective internal regulation of in-migration by the Hmong community. In the Dallas-Fort Worth area, for example, local Hmong residents strongly encourage families wishing to in-migrate to send the household head first, whom they will help to secure employment and housing. After the head is settled, the rest of the family is permitted to come.

Types of Leadership

The foregoing descriptions of the various forms of Hmong leadership which developed in Laos and evolved during the many years of war and relocation in Laos and in Thailand exemplify the adaptability and strength of Hmong institutions. These different types of leadership have continued to evolve as the Hmong adjust to yet another new environment--that encountered in their resettlement here in the United States. Some of these forms of leadership are more visible to non-Hmong than others. Attempts to understand and facilitate the process of Hmong resettlement in this country must not only work with those representatives of the Hmong who are most accessible to non-Hmong (i.e., individuals who are bilingual, well-educated, somewhat acculturated), but also recognize the importance of other forms of Hmong leadership not so readily apparent outside the communities. Traditional kin-based leadership, the military hierarchy of influence, the guidance and support of the small elite of educated young people, and the representation of community-wide organizations--all of these are forms of leadership which have been carried over from previous Hmong experience and adapted to life here. These types of leadership are described separately here; however, they can and often do overlap.

Hmong kin ties are one of the few constants in the unsettled history of the Hmong. Throughout the many changes in their lives--moves to new villages, residence in vast enclaves of Hmong (and other ethnic groups) within Laos as well as in refugee camps in Thailand where village ties could no longer be maintained, arbitrary placement with American sponsors in unknown locations--throughout all these changes, Hmong people have

always known they could rely on members of their lineage group and, to a somewhat lesser degree, on the larger group, the clan. Thus, it is not surprising that traditional kin-based leaders continue to play a very powerful role in the lives of the Hmong in this country. As noted earlier, decisions are made at the most practical level. Lineage group and clan leaders continue to be the individuals Hmong families consult when faced with important decisions, even when they live thousands of miles apart. (Interestingly enough, the modern convenience of the telephone has facilitated the maintenance of this traditional form of leadership.) These traditional leaders are actively involved in such important decisions as moving from one community to another (see Thao, 1982), marriage negotiations, or organizing and initiating new economic endeavors. Their influence within their communities is considerable and far-reaching. Nevertheless, their leadership is rarely acknowledged, if even noticed, by most non-Hmong individuals or organizations.

Another form of Hmong leadership has been carried over to the resettlement process: military leadership. General Vang Pao, who was the military leader of Hmong forces fighting the communists in Laos, continues to be a powerful and respected figure in the United States. Many clan leaders were officers in the military, and the previously described role of the military in organizing the large enclaves of Hmong in Laos and later in Thailand gave many men valuable experience which they have since applied to the resettlement of their clans and lineage groups in this country. (An example of this carry-over can be found in the way mutual assistance associations (MAAs) in the larger Hmong communities disseminate information: Rather than mapping and monitoring the spread of information via traditional extended family networks, they

use a geographically-based, residential grid--much like the grids necessary in the camps in Thailand and the enormous Hmong enclaves in Laos where limited space and the haphazard arrival of families did not allow for traditional kin-based residential groupings.) The military hierarchy broadly affects all Hmong communities in the United States and overlaps with other forms of leadership.

A form of Hmong leadership which appears to have developed in response to the institution-based orientation to service provision in the United States is the mutual assistance association. Such an association provides a vehicle for Hmong community control of public funding and visible leadership through which the American community can channel services. Although the type of association is new, the function and form of leadership embodied in MAAs is similar to forms of leadership developed previously. Like village leaders in Laos, the leader of an MAA is elected to represent the entire community, and, in fact, usually is the elected community leader (Thao, 1982). Individuals active in the operation of an MAA are usually Hmong who were educated in Laos and who gained leadership experience in the military and then in the camps in Thailand, where they represented their fellow Hmong in dealings with Thai and international relief service providers, as well as with American immigration officials.

Mutual assistance associations have enjoyed mixed success as an influential force in Hmong communities. Individuals active in the MAAs have an important role to play in relations between the Hmong and American communities, particularly in the design and presentation of services. However, their position within the Hmong community must be kept in perspective; they may not be as influential within the community

as they are visible to outsiders. The existence of other leaders (such as lineage group leaders) with greater authority or different realms of influence may be a critical factor in the success of programs sponsored by MAAs.

Many MAAs are affiliated--part of a nationally known organization called Lao Family Community, Inc., which was formed under the guidance of General Vang Pao. Others are independent. Some communities have chosen not to form an MAA. Their reasons are varied, based on the present political configuration of their community or perhaps on past experience with mixing politics and funding, for example. In other communities, the MAA is very strong, playing a pivotal role in obtaining funds and designing programs to meet Hmong needs. Programs sponsored by MAAs include ESL training, gardening projects, employment counseling, some specific job training, facilitation of health services, and interpretation (including emergency interpretation services).

As will be described in greater detail in subsequent sections of this report, associations of Hmong college students and college-bound high school students have sprung up in many communities around the United States. Because access to higher education is a recent phenomenon for most Hmong, these organizations may appear to be providing a new form of leadership. However, their roots can be traced to the association formed years ago by the small group of Hmong youth studying in Vientiane. Like that group, these student associations have formed to provide mutual support and encouragement for Hmong students struggling to further their schooling. Also like the group before them, these new student groups represent a non-traditional type of organization, cutting across kin ties. The members of these organizations are very committed to working

for the betterment of their communities and have sometimes taken on the role of providing a forum for the discussion of community adjustment issues or problems encountered in dealing with or understanding the surrounding host community. Since these Hmong youth are bilingual, educated and relatively comfortable with American social norms, they are often viewed by non-Hmong as spokespersons for their communities. Their ability to facilitate interactions and understanding between Hmong and non-Hmong cannot be ignored; however, the relatively little influence they have within their own communities must also be recognized by non-Hmong working with them.

All of these forms of leadership contribute to the process of Hmong resettlement in the United States and must be considered in any resettlement effort.

CHAPTER III

HOW THE HMONG ARE FARING IN THE UNITED STATES

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at where the Hmong have settled in the United States and some of the reasons for their continuing secondary migration from one part of the country to another. This chapter looks more closely at how the Hmong are faring here, how "successful" their resettlement appears from various perspectives. The overall quality of "success" of Hmong resettlement is not, of course, easy to measure or evaluate. There are many possible indicators of the success of resettlement. These include (1) measures of current economic status, such as labor force participation, welfare utilization and family income; (2) leading indicators of future adjustment, such as the educational attainment and English language abilities of Hmong youth; and (3) perhaps more intangible but nevertheless crucial indicators of successful adjustment, such as how the Hmong see their future, the hopes and goals they have and their motivation to attain them.

The indicators given particular emphasis in this research include measures of economic adjustment (employment, welfare dependence and economic development projects and enterprises), progress in English acquisition, and educational attainment. These were selected as major areas needing indepth analysis primarily because they represent major resettlement concerns of the Hmong themselves and also areas on which resettlement policymakers and service providers have concentrated their efforts. Each of these areas of emphasis is discussed in this chapter in

considerable detail. To answer the general question of how the Hmong are faring in each of these areas of concern, numerous issues must be addressed: the history and current status of the experience of the Hmong with regard to each topic, including both difficulties and particularly positive aspects; the barriers to effective Hmong resettlement as seen by the Hmong and by resettlement workers directly involved with the Hmong; the role of secondary migration; examples of successful ways of dealing with the problems and barriers; and suggestions from Hmong leaders and individuals and resettlement service providers regarding ways to improve the delivery of services and facilitate the adjustment of the Hmong to life in this country and help them attain their goals.

The discussion of resettlement issues in this report draws heavily on the results of the indepth case studies which were conducted during the period from December 1982 through June 1983 in seven Hmong communities around the country: Orange County, California; Fresno, California; Portland, Oregon; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas; Fort Smith, Arkansas; and Providence, Rhode Island. One of the major findings of this research is the wide variation in the status of Hmong resettlement among different communities. Understanding these differences is critical to understanding the process of Hmong resettlement in this country and the problems encountered in attempts to facilitate that process. This chapter incorporates data from the case studies, compares and contrasts the status of Hmong resettlement in the seven communities, and notes pertinent information from other communities as well. For a firm basis for comparison, the reader is urged to review

carefully the summaries of the seven case study reports found in Appendix 1 prior to further exploration of the resettlement issues which are the subject of this report.

After the issues involved in each of the major resettlement topics have been presented, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the needs of special segments of the Hmong population (in particular, the needs of women, the elderly and youth).

Economic Adjustment

Introduction

Of the many challenges facing Hmong migrating from traditional life in the highlands of Laos to the industrial economy of the United States, perhaps none is greater than that of economic adjustment. Successful economic adjustment provides tools for helping to make other necessary changes and facilitates the overall resettlement process. Failure to adapt successfully to new economic realities can bring with it a whole host of related problems which could greatly complicate and hinder Hmong resettlement for years--and possibly even generations--to come: poverty, dependence, undereducation, discrimination, social segregation.

In asking how Hmong are now faring economically, then, one needs not only to describe their current economic status, but to get some sense of the potentialities of their economic future. What can be expected in the short- and long-range future; what barriers may block their future self-sufficiency; and what strategies promise to facilitate their economic advance?

Before turning to the three primary economic indicators to be discussed here--employment, welfare dependence and economic development

activity--some caveats are in order. First, few public agencies, whether local, state or federal, maintain information about Hmong individuals as a designated group. Thus there are no systematic census data available for Hmong, no unemployment data, or income data. Furthermore, the scope of this Study did not allow the conducting of an independent census or survey of Hmong communities to collect such data, useful as they might be. The Study has had to rely on extant data, informal polls in group meetings, documentary information where available, estimates by knowledgeable informants, and similar sources to estimate rates of employment and welfare dependence, for example. When several types of data were available in a community, they tended to converge closely. Wherever data from formal surveys were available, these were used as a primary source.

There are other reasons the employment rate among Hmong adults remains difficult to measure accurately. First, in many communities, Hmong who are both employed and economically self-sufficient drop out of local agency data (if available) and figures such as employment services registries or welfare rolls. Second, though in smaller Hmong communities leaders are likely to have a very accurate count of households or persons working, in the larger settlements it is impossible for any one Hmong or public source to know all the families' economic status. Third, even where knowledgeable informants provide estimates there is often variation in how employment rates may be estimated--some informants may think in terms of percent of household heads (mostly men) working, others in terms of all adults, others in terms of only those they consider employable adults. Similar problems exist, of course, in estimating the flip-side of the employment rate: the public dependence rate.

For this Study, as many informants and documentary sources as possible were used to draw an accurate picture of Hmong employment in the seven communities studied. For other communities around the country, knowledgeable Hmong informants were contacted by phone. Appendix 2 lists the rates of employment and dependence for these communities, as gathered through this informal method.

Based on the community case studies, previous surveys and telephone conversations, it is not possible to ascertain the actual numbers of Hmong working. However, always considering the possible discrepancies in the data, a general picture can be put together. The most meaningful and feasible way of measuring employment has turned out to be in terms of household heads working. This gives the best impression of the proportion of Hmong households that have income from employment.

Factors Affecting Employment

Of over 8,700 households encompassed by available data (representing more than 50,000 individuals), 33% or just about a third have household heads working. This overall figure is deceptive, however, because substantial differences are found among the Hmong communities. Such differences among resettlement sites are a major feature of Hmong economic adjustment. The overall picture averages out these differences. Some Hmong communities have a relatively high rate of employment and others experience extremely low rates of employment. In California, employment rates tend to be quite low: In seven major California Hmong communities studied, only approximately 7.4% of household heads are employed. Outside of California, however, the situation is not as bleak: Just over half (about 55%) of the household

heads are employed. But even outside of California, the situation varies widely: In the Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul, less than a quarter (22%) of the household heads are working, whereas in the Dallas-Fort Worth and Fort Smith areas, nearly all household heads are working. The data in Table 9 show the wide variation among field sites studied. Similar variations are evident throughout the country, as seen in the data shown in Appendix 2.

Context factors--local differences. Despite the possible differences in accuracy from community to community, data from the case studies, available surveys from other studies and telephone conversations show some clear local patterns in present Hmong employment in this country. Table 9 gives a very brief summary of the estimated Hmong dependence and employment rates and some of the context factors in the seven communities in which case studies were conducted.

A somewhat unexpected pattern emerges in which the extent of Hmong employment is not always consistent with the general population jobless rate in a community. For example, the Hmong employment rate in Providence is relatively high (60 - 70% of households have someone working) even though Rhode Island has the highest general population unemployment rate in New England (12.2%). Conversely, Orange County and the Twin Cities, with lower general population unemployment rates than Rhode Island (5.0% and 7.4% respectively) have a substantially higher rate of unemployment among Hmong than does Providence. One factor which may account for this is the type of jobs available in a given locale. The job market in Providence consists of entry-level factory jobs, for which the Hmong are qualified, while Orange County's economy is focused on highly skilled, high-tech industry jobs beyond the reach of most

Table 9: Summary of Employment and Dependence in Case Study Sites
(Spring 1983)

<u>Site</u>	<u>Estimated Unemployment Rate for General Population at Time of Study</u>	<u>% Hmong Households with Someone Working</u>	<u>Typical Types of Work</u>	<u>Pay</u>	<u>Health Benefits</u>	<u>Welfare Policy</u>	<u>% Hmong Families Receiving Some Public Assistance</u>	<u>Approx. Hmong Population</u>
Twin Cities	7.4%	16-25% adults 23.2% of men 8.3% of women	Most in unskilled labor: maintenance, factory, services also interpreters and teachers, teenage summer jobs	Primarily minimum wages	Often no health benefits for family	AFDC; AFDC-U; GA; 100 hr. work limitation	85% households	10,000
Providence	12.2%	60-70%; 35-40% household have 2 wage earners	Entry-level jobs in jewelry industry, assemblers, packers Some supervisors, teacher aides	\$4-\$6/hr.	Most larger companies offer health insurance	AFDC; GA comparable to AFDC; GA supplements and medical insurance available based on income	30% 15% work and receive supplement	2,500
Dallas/Ft. Worth	6.1%	Almost 100% of workforce, majority have multiple incomes	Manufacture, assembly, shrimp factories, some skilled technicians	Men avg. \$4-\$7/hr.; women avg. \$3.35-\$5.50 some higher	Most employers offer health insurance	AFDC, but small amount	5%	360
Ft. Smith	11.8%	93%	Almost all work in chicken processing plants	Minimum wages; some higher	Almost no health benefits	Very minimal assistance available	0%	298
Portland	12.0%	More than 50% have multiple incomes	Manufacturing, services, agriculture, seasonal supplements to some skilled labor, teacher aides	Most \$3.50/hr.; a few up to \$11/hr.	Some jobs have health benefits	AFDC only, very minimal GA	30%	1,050
Orange County	5.0%	25-30%	Assembly services, a few skilled technicians and laborers	Minimum wages, avg. \$4.50/hr.	Some jobs have health benefits	AFDC & AFDC-U; 100 hr. work limitation	80-85%	3,000
Fresno	15.0%	4-10%; another 10% self-employed as truck farmers	Almost no one employed; some labor; bilingual aides; a few self-employed farmers	\$4.50/hr.	Few jobs have them	AFDC & AFDC-U; 100 hrs. work limitation	15%+	10,000+

Hmong. The types of jobs available and the types of jobs Hmong are finding will be examined further below.

Another factor which appears to affect Hmong employment is the availability of welfare. In states where welfare is minimal, Hmong dependence rates and corresponding unemployment rates are also low, while, in general, states with generous welfare benefits also have high Hmong dependence rates. This, however, is not always the case. Rhode Island, which offers generous public assistance, nevertheless has a relatively high rate of employment among the Hmong. This will be considered further below.

Even within given areas, there have been wide variations over time in the Hmong's employment status. In Orange County, for example, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, many Hmong found employment in the high technology manufacturing industries, which were rapidly expanding at the time. Even Hmong without good English language skills were easily employed. A couple of years later, midway through a major recession, most of the jobs had dried up, Hmong were increasingly laid off and found themselves hard pressed to compete for work in a much tighter job market.

Hmong secondary migration has also had a major impact on Hmong employment. As previously discussed, secondary migration has been, in part, a response to perceived local employment opportunities. Hmong groups may leave one city because of poor employment prospects there and migrate to another area because of its perceived employment opportunities. The mass exodus of Hmong from Portland to the Central Valley was a response, in part, to the poor employment opportunities for Hmong in Portland. Migration of Hmong from numerous states to Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas was driven by perceptions of expanded opportunities in those economic environments.

Individual differences. In considering the variations in Hmong employment rates among communities, one must also consider the major cross-cutting differences among individuals. The extent of employment and the barriers individuals face in finding work vary sharply among different segments of the Hmong communities. Discussions with knowledgeable informants in the field sites indicated not surprisingly that age, sex, educational background, length of time in the United States, English language ability and job skills all have an impact on the individual's ability to access the labor market. Other research supports these findings.

Pullen and Ryan (1982a) examined employment profiles of Southeast Asian refugees who had arrived in Portland between 1979 and 1981, the peak years for Hmong arrival. They found independence from the welfare system to be higher among those refugees who had been in the country longer. Labor force participation was also influenced by age: Two-thirds of the heads of households under 35 were employed or full-time students, another 15 percent were looking for work. The group aged 35-44 had the highest proportion of employed household heads, but also contained twice as many people (17%) not actively looking for work. Over 45 years of age, the proportion of employed was about the same as the youngest group (about 30%), but 50% of the persons interviewed in this older age group were not actively looking for work.

The 1981 refugee survey, conducted by the Immigrant and Refugee Planning Center (IRPC) in Orange County (Baldwin, 1982) found that unemployment was highest among refugees 45 years and older; employment was highest in the 25-34 year age category; women were more likely to be unemployed than men; and unemployment was affected by a refugee's

educational background. The largest unemployed subgroup of males consisted of those with less than a high school education who had lived in the United States less than 2 years.

The results of the present Study, combined with available Hmong household surveys, find similar differences in employment by age, sex, time in the United States and educational background. With the exception of certain communities such as Fort Smith and Providence, a larger proportion of Hmong men are working than Hmong women. This pattern is true of the American labor force in general, though sex differences in employment appear greater among Hmong. And in general, younger Hmong are more likely to be working than older Hmong.

Table 10 below shows the employment status of 135 households in four Hmong communities surveyed as part of the Study of Refugee English Language Training (SRELT) (Reder & Cohn, 1984). Proportionately, ten times as many men are working, and employment declines regularly with advancing age. The 1982 Hmong Community Survey conducted by the

Table 10

PERCENT HMONG ADULTS WORKING BY AGE AND SEX

(from Study of Refugee English Language Training Phase II Surveys:
Twin Cities, Denver, Seattle, and Stockton;
conducted May and June, 1982)

	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>N</u>
Age 20-29	5.7%	37.3%	22.3%	43
Age 30-39	2.7%	30.2%	17.5%	30
Age 40-49	0	18.2%	8.3%	18
Age 50-59	0	11.1%	4.0%	9
Age 60+	0	0	0	12
All	2.7%	26.8%	14.8%	112

University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities showed similar patterns to the SRELT survey and refugee surveys cited above: 23.2% of men were working, compared to 8.3% of women; the highest number of people who had worked in the U.S. were in the 25-34 year bracket (24.9%) followed by 18-24 (20.9%), and declining linearly after age 34 (Olney, 1983). This same survey also showed a significant positive relationship between time in the United States and employment status, and between self-rated English proficiency and employment status.

Of course, the background factors that appear to influence Hmong work status are themselves highly correlated: Women are more likely to have less education; the less educated are more likely to show slower progress in learning English; older Hmong are more likely to learn English more slowly and have less education (Reder, 1982). Some excerpts from discussions with Hmong individuals across the nation illustrate how Hmong themselves see individual characteristics affecting employment and self-sufficiency.

Older people are less likely to be able to find a job. A man told about his father, who lives with the family:

My father lives with me. He was born on March 1, 1917. He's too old to get a job and nobody wants to hire him. We have applied for social security insurance but they say he doesn't qualify yet. My father says that in Laos we were not rich people but we were self-sufficient. They never asked anyone for food. My father is old but he can grow vegetables and take care of our family Sometimes my father talks about hanging himself. He has no income, nothing to do and nothing to eat. I don't know what he will do today, or what he will do tomorrow. He has not a hope for this world. Sometimes I feel the same way. Does the government have an elderly job for my father? It would give my father some hope. And if there is no father, there is no son.

Women are less likely to be working. A 33-year old widow with two children commented:

My biggest worry is that I lack education and a job. I don't have a husband, and it is very hard to find work. When I first came here it was very hard. When I was in Laos, I could always find someone to work for on a farm. I could work there and get food for the family. When I came here I cried and cried. I cried so much I couldn't see the letters when I studied English at school.

Younger men with previous education and English ability are more likely to be working. X. is 30 years old, has a wife and two children. In Laos he finished all but the last year and a half of high school, including 2 years of English. He works as a machinist and has moved up in the last 5 years from a starting wage of \$7.00 to \$11.50 per hour now. He got his job training entirely on his own. While working at his first job at a paper bag factory he took a class in blueprint reading and machine shop and paid his own tuition. He worked 10 hours a day and went straight from work to class. Now he is buying his own house and has two cars.

Types of Employment

Discussing Hmong employment only in terms of overall rates of employment leaves out important aspects of the situation. The types of jobs Hmong hold, the wages they are paid for their work, the extent to which medical benefits are provided by employers, and the incidence of households having two or more workers--these are all important aspects of Hmong employment and attainment of economic self-sufficiency. Hard data on these matters are often difficult to obtain. However, information was compiled from the community case studies from which some general conclusions can be drawn.

Although Hmong are employed at a variety of jobs, there are certain characteristics in common among the jobs most Hmong now hold. Most often, the jobs are entry-level positions in light manufacturing requiring little previous training, for example, electronics assembly, jewelry grinding, machine operation, sorting and collating, or food processing. Hmong are also employed at minimum wages in industries connected with various facets of agriculture, particularly nursery work, and in service jobs such as janitorial work or food service. Hmong also hold a range of jobs that are semi-skilled or skilled that sometimes take advantage of previous Hmong experience in Laos. These include metal fabrication, carpentry work and industrial sewing. Such jobs generally do not provide medical benefits to employees and their families.

Most of the jobs mentioned thus far require minimal English to learn or to perform. Commonly, however, in companies hiring more than one Hmong person, the first person hired can communicate in English and help the others. This kind of unskilled and semi-skilled entry-level work often does not offer much chance for advancement even though in some companies Hmong have received regular incremental pay raises if they remain on the job. Based on the typical wages of Hmong interviewed across the country, in these entry jobs a Hmong man might expect to earn an average of about \$4.50 an hour up to about \$7.00 an hour. A Hmong woman would probably earn from \$3.35 to \$5.00 an hour. These jobs are very seldom unionized jobs, and health insurance may or may not be offered depending on the size and management of the company.

Another group of jobs involving skilled labor are filled by a much smaller group of Hmong, usually those who have had access to vocational training of some kind and whose English is usually sufficient to

communicate with an employer without a translator. These positions include machinists, welders and tool and die makers. Their pay is higher than those in the entry-level, unskilled positions and ranges from about \$6.00 an hour to \$11.00 an hour; these workers generally receive health benefits.

A third group of Hmong are working in bilingual social service and educational jobs. These positions are most often available in those communities where there has been a large Hmong population, and where schools and social service agencies have made an effort to provide bilingual help. These professionals are made up almost exclusively of Hmong who have been educated in Laos or in the United States and those whose written and verbal English skills are more advanced. The pay scales of these jobs vary considerably from locale to locale--a bilingual teacher aide may earn as little as \$4.00 an hour in some places, and a welfare caseworker as much as \$15,000 a year. A very small number of Hmong are also beginning to work in such white collar jobs as insurance sales and secretarial work; these positions are taken by young Hmong who for the most part have been educated in this country.

The general picture of Hmong employment, then, is that the majority of the employed work in non-union, minimum wage jobs and a smaller number in more highly skilled labor and technical or white collar jobs.

Community Differences in Employment Patterns

Although Hmong employment can be described in general terms, during the course of fieldwork for the seven community case studies staff researchers were impressed with the variability of the different aspects of employment across communities. A brief tour of the employment scene in each of the case study communities will illustrate the rich diversity of situations Hmong encounter in the world of work.

Communities with high rates of employment--(1) Dallas-Fort Worth. In the Dallas-Fort Worth area, where over 90 percent of the adult Hmong in the labor force are employed, men's wages range between \$4.00 and \$7.00 per hour (two receive over \$8.00). Most women earn from \$3.35 to over \$5.00; those women recently promoted to supervisory positions now earn around \$6.50 per hour. One leader estimated men's wages to average \$6.00-7.00, women's \$4.00-5.00 per hour. Another said monthly earnings ranged between \$1,000 and \$1,500. Household incomes tend to be relatively high because a majority of Hmong households have more than one wage earner. Nearly all full-time jobs pay fringe benefits, including 80% coverage for health care.

Most Hmong working full-time are employed in manufacturing. Jobs range from assembly to engineering and design/management. Some Hmong women in Dallas have jobs deveining shrimp, doing sewing or light assembly work, and a few do housekeeping or dishwashing. During 1983 a few Hmong women were promoted to supervisory positions. Some women hold clerical jobs. There are no Hmong employed full-time in social services or sales.

These data demonstrate that the Hmong in the Dallas area are doing very well economically compared to refugees in many other parts of the

country. But despite this seemingly rosy picture of employment, the economic outlook is not equally good for all Hmong families in Dallas-Fort Worth.

Hmong employment and Hmong workers in the Dallas area fall into two categories. Individuals who have very limited English language ability hold jobs with pay near the minimum wage where fluency in English is not a criterion for employment. Many of these people were originally resettled in this area and started work soon after arriving in Dallas without having an opportunity to learn English or acquire new skills. These people, who work primarily in manufacturing, are not able to upgrade their job skills or to learn English on the job because of their limited ability to communicate and few have any prospect of advancement. Consider the following example: After 3 years on the job, P. was unable to name the machine he operates. His company employs several Hmong, and he speaks Hmong, not English, on the job. He uses mainly sign language to communicate with his foreman. He never expects a promotion or a pay raise, other than cost of living increases.

Because of the recent economic downturn some Hmong have been laid off. Hmong with low English skills and minimum wage jobs are generally fearful of being laid off and afraid that they may be unable to obtain another job because fewer employers will accept workers who cannot fill out applications and interview in English.

The second group of Hmong employees in the Dallas-Fort Worth area are those who have a reasonably good command of English, specific job skills, and in some cases one or more years of higher education. Generally, these people were secondary migrants to Texas who acquired training elsewhere and came to Dallas to find work. These individuals, mainly but not exclusively men, have good-paying jobs, possibilities of

advancement, greater job security, and alternative employment possibilities. Because they communicate regularly in English, spoken and sometimes written, they are constantly improving their command of English, and thus eliminating the obstacle that language poses for the first group.

One Hmong informant estimates about 40% of Hmong workers in the Dallas area are in the first group and approximately 60% are in the second. Those workers and their families who fall into the latter group may be said to have achieved successful resettlement in the U.S., or at least to be well on their way. Their future prospects are as good as those of any Southeast Asian refugees in the country; economically, at least, their situation is not much different from native-born Americans fortunate enough to be living at a time and place where well-paid jobs are plentiful. For the others, who have not acquired a good command of English and have not been able to upgrade job skills, their success depends very much on the economy. If jobs remain plentiful in the area, they will be able at least to survive. If they lose their present jobs and employment opportunities shrink, as was the case in early 1983, they will have few resources to call upon.

(2) Fort Smith. A high rate of Hmong employment in an area is no guarantee that economic well-being is also high, however. The case of the Hmong community in Fort Smith, Arkansas, stands out in sharp contrast to the Dallas-Fort Worth area. As in Dallas, the rate of employment in Fort Smith* is relatively high: 93% of the households have at least one person working; 40% have at least two workers in the household. However,

*in early March 1983, at the time of this study

all of the women and nearly all of the men are employed in a single occupation: cutting, trimming or deboning chicken, at one or the other of two local poultry processing plants. The typical pay is the minimum wage. Experienced workers can make up to \$4.25 per hour as base pay. At the plant where most of the Hmong work, there is no employer-paid health care plan. In the typical case, then, Hmong workers are earning near minimum wage at less than full-time, with large families to feed and no health care coverage to protect against high medical bills.

The Hmong, refugee workers, and employment specialists in Fort Smith all agree that the poultry processing industry is the only employer there willing to accept persons with very low English language proficiency. Only a handful of Hmong in Fort Smith have obtained other jobs: Two work for a glass company, two work part-time for the Adult Basic Education program, and one has a good job on the assembly line at a food processing company.

An important point to note in evaluating the Hmong employment situation in Fort Smith is that many of the unemployed and many of those working in the poultry plants have a variety of skills. Among them are persons who were government officials, military officers, communications specialists, carpenters, blacksmiths, truck drivers, and nurses in Laos. They have also held jobs in the U.S. in electronics assembly, quality control, diesel mechanics, custodial work, nursing (nurse's aide), and machine sewing. Some of these people speak English quite adequately for a variety of occupations, and the individuals who have not found work in Fort Smith include some with the best command of English and the best previous work experience. The best-educated Hmong man in Fort Smith is unemployed, and so is a man who practiced Western medicine in Laos.

There are many reasons for the employment problems facing the Hmong in Fort Smith, including: (1) the current economic slump and high general unemployment; (2) a lack of aggressive employment efforts, especially job development for refugees; (3) the inconsistent use of English proficiency as a criterion for employment; and (4) overt discrimination.*

Communities with low rates of employment. At the other end of the spectrum of rates of employment are three large Hmong communities with low rates of employment: those in Orange County and Fresno, California, and the Twin Cities in Minnesota.

(1) Orange County. Estimates of current Hmong employment rates vary in Orange County. One leader estimated that between 30 and 40% are employed--the same estimate was given by a bilingual welfare worker. Another welfare worker estimated that between 10-15% of households have someone working. The Lao Family Community estimate for current employment is about 25%. All informants agree that current employment, both in terms of actual numbers and percentage of the adult Hmong population, is far below the preceding 2 years. Recent layoffs and a change in the period of eligibility for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), which, unlike AFDC-U, had no restrictions on persons working more than 100 hours, have contributed to this decline.

* Shortly after the fieldwork for this Study was completed, the Hmong in Fort Smith began to move. Approximately half of them moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where both men and women obtained jobs at double the wages that they had earned in Fort Smith. Others moved to Wisconsin or to California, abandoning their dream of independence in Arkansas.

Working Hmong in Orange County usually start at minimum wage levels, except in certain machining and warehouse jobs, where the starting pay is higher. Individuals and community leaders say that those who maintain their jobs receive regular, though not always large, pay raises, until they reach about \$7.00 an hour. These pay raises have not kept up with the rising cost of living in the area, however.

In Capturing the Change, Baldwin (1982) reports that in June 1981, 83% of Lao/Hmong households in Orange County earned less than \$12,000 per year; 5% earned between \$12,000-18,000; 8% received \$18,000-24,000; and 4% had total household earnings of \$24,000 or more. The same data showed 32% of Vietnamese, 83% of Laotian and 46% of Cambodian refugee households earn less than \$12,000 annually. Considering that 87% of Hmong households contained more than five people at that time and were likely to pay over \$350 per month rent, average earnings allowed families just to subsist on earned income. A yearly income of \$16,618 in 1981 would support a family of four at a low standard of living, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Hmong work at many different kinds of jobs in Orange County, but the most commonly held jobs are factory jobs, particularly electronics and other types of light industrial work. Hmong with English skills are also employed as social service workers, and others are working as machinists, warehousemen, child care workers and flower sellers. Some with training are working as electronics technicians and auto mechanics. Hmong bilingual workers and leaders identify assembly and mechanical jobs as jobs at which the Hmong perform best and in which they have had the most success in Orange County.

The Immigrant and Refugee Planning Center survey cited above, in which in-home interviews were held in May and June of 1981, showed the following occupational profile for Hmong (Baldwin, 1982:50):

Professional Technical	6%
White Collar	3%
Blue Collar	6%
Electronics	0%
Student	37%
Housewife	11%
Out of Work/Retired	37%

The following Hmong employment and income profiles of seven employed or recently employed individuals interviewed in the course of the fieldwork for this Study show a pattern which appears to be typical of Hmong employment in Orange County: more male workers; employment in light, high-technology industry; entry at minimum wage with gradual pay increases; location of jobs through job service centers; and recent termination of jobs due to layoffs or welfare supplement cutoffs.

1. Male, age 55, family of ten, no previous education, works at an optical products company, earns \$700 a month, no benefits or insurance.
2. Male, age 28, family of six, 2nd grade education, works as an electronics assembler. He has been working there for 1-1/2 years at a beginning salary of \$3.78 an hour. He now earns \$6.08. He found his job through USCC.
3. Male, age 36, family of five, 10th grade education, works as an electronics controller. He has worked there 4 years and now earns \$5.30 an hour plus \$150 a month bonus. He found his job through the newspaper.
4. Male, age 37, family of seven, no previous education, works as a machine operator. He has been working there for 2-1/2 years (his third job in the U.S.) at a beginning salary of \$4.00 an hour and now earns \$5.00 an hour. He found his job on his own.
5. Female, age 35 (approximately), no previous education, works as a child care worker, brings home \$308.50 every 2 weeks. She is the wife of #6 below.

6. Male, age 50, family of 5 or 6, 6th grade education in Laos, laid off April 1983 from a factory manufacturing gem cutting tools. He had worked there 4 years with a beginning salary of \$3.50 an hour. He was earning \$7.50 an hour when he was laid off.
7. Male, age 45, family of four, no previous education, worked as a boat painter for 2-1/2 years. Left June 1982 because he could not receive medical aid under welfare regulations since he was working full time. He had a beginning salary of \$3.15 an hour and ended at \$4.50 an hour.

(2) Fresno. The center of the nation's agri-business, Fresno offers another pattern. With high unemployment in the general population (15-18% at present), there are few employment opportunities for Hmong in the Fresno area. Knowledgeable leaders estimate that about 25% of the Hmong in Fresno are "financially independent" of public assistance. This group includes working families (both salaried and full-time self-employed farmers) as well as those who are both unemployed and ineligible for public assistance (and who must be supported by others). The exact mixture of these types is not known.

Data from the Fresno case study suggest that the Hmong employment rate is very low indeed. The consensus of the Hmong informants was that 5-10% of Hmong adults are employed. (This figure excludes the approximately 10% who are self-employed as truck farmers.) These informants report that most who are working are in social services (i.e., bilinguals) or farming or factory labor. In group meetings, only two of over 100 men reported being currently employed in salaried jobs: one as a full-time auto mechanic (making \$4.50 an hour with medical benefits for himself but not his family), another working part-time as a bilingual tutor in the schools (earning \$4.15 an hour with no benefits). At the

same time, about 20% of the participants in the group meetings interviewed reported having worked previously elsewhere in the United States.

The low percentage of families with someone working reflects: (1) the dearth of available jobs in Fresno for anyone, particularly Hmong; and (2) the disincentives to work, to be examined below, represented by welfare regulations. An employment service counselor for the Economic Development Department (EDD) in Fresno indicated that although "a few" Hmong have been placed in factory jobs and janitorial services:

. . . the job market for Hmong in Fresno does not look good. Hmong are used to manual work--Fresno has very few industries--a few small electronics assembly companies which hire Mexicans and other minority groups are not opening their doors to newcomers. Perhaps when the U.S. economy becomes better, the Hmong will have an opportunity to be hired.

The biggest problem faced by the Hmong seeking employment, all parties agree, is their lack of English skills. The service industry in Fresno does have openings from time to time, but few Hmong have the requisite language or job skills according to the counselor. Nor have there been any job training programs available locally. The counselor went on to note, "however, because the job market is not good, a person will not get a job after training."

But many Hmong do find intermittent, seasonal farming jobs. EDD had placed about 350 people in these jobs during 1982 and hopes to place more in future years. Earnings in these jobs are generally determined on a piece-rate basis and are difficult to measure. Individuals rarely make more than \$20 per day and during the hot summer months the work is oppressive.

Approximately 10% of families are self-employed in farming, generally renting land, buying seeds, supplies and water, raising vegetables (sugar peas, cherry tomatoes, chiles) and, for the first time in 1983, some are trying the more expensive, but potentially lucrative, strawberries.

A very knowledgeable informant with a good grasp on the extent of Hmong farming in the Fresno area reports that 650-700 acres are being farmed by 200-250 independent farmers, most starting with 2 to 3 acres. The experience of two typical farmers follows:

M., a man in his mid-thirties, has been farming for 2 years in Fresno. He made pretty good money last year, starting without any help (and his family's money), growing 2 acres of sugar peas. This year he is investing earnings from last year and is raising 2.3 acres of sugar peas (for which he had to invest \$2,000) and 2.7 acres of strawberries, for which he invested \$7,000. Noting that he already has a sales contract for his strawberries (but not for the sugar peas), he proudly points out he is the first Hmong strawberry farmer. His wife and young children work with him every day on their farm, commuting about 10 miles from town.

T. has a farm not too far from M.'s farm. He is also growing strawberries for the first time this year, and he is a lucky one: He is working 9 acres loaned to him by a company, who is also lending him capital for the operation. He will repay these loans directly out of the proceeds from selling strawberries. T., with \$500 of his family's "own money," is also trying out one-half acre of cherry tomatoes as an experiment this year. He is thinking ahead to "next year's business."

(3) The Twin Cities. According to the household survey conducted in 1982 in Minneapolis-St. Paul (Olney, 1983), 29.2% of Hmong households in the Twin Cities have someone working, while only 3.0% have two or more

employed. Of those who do work, only 50% work 30 or more hours a week. Of those who are not working, 38% said they are actively seeking a job and 62% said they are not. Hmong leaders in the Twin Cities estimate that currently about 25% of the Hmong are employed. A survey conducted by the Minnesota State Refugee Office in the summer of 1982 indicated that 46% of the Hmong households had someone who was employed. While the range of these employment figures is wide, they all indicate that there is very high unemployment in the Hmong community in the Twin Cities. Furthermore, many of those who do have employment should not be considered self-sufficient.

Most of the Hmong who are employed have either unskilled minimum wage jobs or work in programs that serve refugees. Numerous Hmong have had previous experience or training in skilled jobs, worked at them for a while and did well, but were laid off with the downturn in the economy. One man was a janitor. He did not like his job, but it was stable and he felt it was necessary to keep it. Another held a job as a roofer. His employer was providing on-the-job training; he was happy with the situation. A third collated pages and stapled them together as booklets. His only complaint was that the job was not full time.

A different survey of 77 Twin Cities Hmong households in mid-1981 (Hendricks & Richardson, 1982) found that of those of employable age, 66% of the males and 29% of the females reported some sort of employment. Job categories reported in this survey indicated 31% involved in food service and maintenance work; 30% in some type of factory assembly work; 27% employed in jobs serving other refugees; and 12% holding jobs requiring skilled labor. Relatively few of the families in the sample, however, were recent arrivals. Their longer experience in America as

well as the economic picture at that time may account for the reported employment rate as contrasted with the present situation for the Hmong population in general in the Twin Cities.

The jobs that were reported in the August 1982 household survey (Olney, 1983) were as follows: teacher 8%, interpreter 11%, day care 3%, maintenance 23%, factory 15%, laborer 8%, dishwasher 5%, other 8%, and summer jobs held by teenagers 19%.

Communities with intermediate levels of employment. The two remaining Hmong communities in the set of case studies, Providence, Rhode Island, and Portland, Oregon, have levels of employment intermediate between those previously described.

(1) Providence. Estimates by leaders and resettlement workers in Providence place the average employment figure for the Hmong there at between 60 and 70%. About 20% of the Hmong earn less than \$4.00 an hour; 70% earn between \$4.00 and \$6.00 an hour and 10% earn \$6.00 or more an hour. The average pay is about \$4.50 an hour, as compared to the \$6.92 per hour wage of the average factory worker in Rhode Island (as of April 1983). Most of the Hmong who work full-time have health insurance. In contrast to other Hmong communities, more women are working than men.

It is remarkable that between 60 and 70% of the Hmong adults have found work in the greater Providence area, given the high percentage of Southeast Asians in the city and the area's chronically high unemployment rate. Hmong must compete for the limited job openings with 2,800 Cambodians and 400 Laotians and lesser numbers of Vietnamese who live in Providence. What accounts for the relative success the Hmong have found in penetrating an economy characterized by lay-offs and plant closings? One answer is that Rhode Island still has industries that need

entry-level workers. The jewelry and related metals industries, which account for an estimated 50% of Hmong employment, have traditionally relied on immigrant, refugee and first and second generation American workers to turn out necklaces, rings, wire and pocketknives. The pay in the jewelry/me industry begins at minimum wage and advances slowly. To a certain extent, many Hmong are locked into these permanent low-wage positions. A high school equivalency diploma is very remote for the average middle-aged Hmong worker. Few companies with large numbers of entry-level Hmong employees have any desire to train or upgrade the quality of their workforce.

With good reason, the Hmong in Providence are reluctant to accept a job that does not include health insurance. Most of the firms in Providence with more than 25 employees offer health insurance, even for jobs paying only slightly higher than minimum wage. The number of Hmong employed would be much lower were it not for this fact. However, some companies offer health coverage only for the employees, while others cover the entire family, provided the employee contributes a percentage of the premium.

About 35-40% of the Hmong households in Providence have two wage earners. With two incomes a family can survive without cash assistance. In many of the families with two incomes, the husband and wife take opposite shifts. Usually the wife will work the first shift to be home in the evening for the children while the husband takes the second shift. By balancing shifts, the family squeezes in child care duties between two full-time jobs. In cases where the husband and wife work the same shift, the family calls on a relative for day care duty. Increasingly, a two-income family will pay a modest amount of money to a

relative in exchange for the child care. Rarely will a family take their children to someone outside of their lineage group.

(2) Portland. The following employment picture can be drawn for the 140 Hmong families in Portland for whom information was available during the case study fieldwork:

<u>Employment Status</u>	<u>Number of Households</u>	<u>Percent Total</u>
Employed full-time (at least one person in the household working full-time)	91	65%
Employed part-time (at least one person in household working part-time)	28	20%
Odd jobs and seasonal labor only	17	12%
No employment in the household	<u>4</u>	<u>3%</u>
	140	100%

Information provided on a large subclan group of 70 Cha clan families, representing about 50% of the Hmong in Portland, portrays an even greater level of labor market participation. Seventy-four% of the Cha households have at least one family member employed. In 32 Cha families (46%) both the husband and wife are employed, while in the remaining 20 families (29%) at least the husband is employed.

This employment status contrasts sharply with that present in Portland's Hmong community 2 years ago, prior to the mass exodus of about 75% of the community for the Central Valley of California. A household survey conducted during April and May 1981 (Reder, 1982) reflected a different employment situation. At the time of that survey, the number of Hmong in the greater Portland metropolitan area was nearing its peak.

Survey findings, representing 332 households (approximately 2,500 individual Hmong), showed that 92% of the households received income from public assistance, 25% from work, and approximately 1% each from unemployment insurance and "other" sources. Households had multiple sources of income: 80% of the households had only one source of income (welfare in almost all of the cases), and 20% had two sources (almost always work and welfare).

The majority of jobs currently held by Hmong fall into four sectors of the Portland labor market: manufacturing, general services, social and educational services and agriculture. The preponderance of these jobs are entry-level positions, although some individuals have advanced to supervisory and skilled labor positions. Overall, the agricultural sector of the labor market employs the largest number of Hmong, providing both seasonal and permanent full-time work. Most permanent positions are found at nurseries, orchards and vineyards, while the seasonal work is done in berry and produce farming. Most service jobs are in the janitorial, food service and hotel/motel industries. Manufacturing jobs involve primarily general labor and operative positions, although in one local firm some Hmong hold the highest skilled jobs, die makers. A total of 30 Hmong men and women are employed in various social service agencies and public education institutions. Most of these jobs are as translators, bilingual classroom aides, community agents and caseworkers.

The following data were gathered at a meeting of 16 male heads of household in Portland. Seven of the 16 heads were employed. Although the types of jobs held by the participants in this meeting do not

represent all the sectors of the Portland labor market in which Hmong are employed, these data provide concrete examples of the work experience of some Hmong.

Approx. Age	Length of Time on Job	Type of Work	Full- or Part-time	Rate of Pay	Medical Benefits
28	3 yrs.	Automotive craft work (fiberglass/custom auto bodies)	Full-time	5.75/hr.	Yes
25	2 yrs.	Automotive craft work (fiberglass/custom auto bodies)	Full-time	4.75/hr.	Yes
45	1 yr.	Making boxes and pallets	Full-time	4.30/hr.	No
35	2-1/2 yrs.	Making boxes and pallets	Full-time	5.00/hr.	No
35	5 mos.	Metal punch operator	Full-time	3.35/hr.	No
23	4 mos.	Restaurant (busboy/dishwasher)	Full-time	3.50/hr.	No
25	5 days	Maintenance at a refugee multi-service center	Full-time	3.35/hr.	No

A microcosm of Hmong employment in Portland is present in one manufacturer's personnel. The firm, which specializes in minum extruding and anodizing, is the single largest employer of Hmong in manufacturing. Currently, 18 of the company's 207 employees are Hmong. While the company also employs Mien, Lao and a few Vietnamese, the Hmong constitute the greatest proportion of the Southeast Asian workforce there. A few Hmong have worked in the plant since 1977. Currently Hmong hold jobs in the entire range of available skilled and unskilled positions: One of six skilled machine operators is Hmong; and three of

eleven die makers are Hmong (the highest skilled positions in the non-professional labor force). Several Hmong are "lead persons" on crews, which are composed of a mix of refugees and non-refugees. Wages for Hmong at this company range from \$5.40/hour to \$10.50/hour.

Hmong also participate increasingly in seasonal agricultural work. Growers value the Hmong and other rural Southeast Asian refugees as harvest workers. Because so many Hmong migrated south to the Central Valley, some Portland growers subsidized Hmong from California to come to Oregon for the summer berry harvest of 1983--450 eventually came. More than 200 additional local Portland Hmong also worked as pickers. Thus at least 650 Hmong harvested crops in the region. If the venture is considered successful by the Hmong who traveled from California to participate in the harvest, both growers and Hmong leaders expect the number of seasonal workers from California to increase substantially in 1984.

Welfare Utilization

Table 9 presented earlier included estimates of welfare dependence rates in the seven case study communities. Estimates for other Hmong communities across the country, gathered by the ORR Hmong/Highland Lao Workgroup, are presented in Appendix 3.

These estimates reveal a number of significant points. Considering the very high dependence rates (70-100%) throughout California and Minnesota (two states which together include about 60% of the Hmong in the United States), and the somewhat lower rates for other, generally smaller communities, it is fairly clear that well over half of the Hmong population in this country relies on some form of public assistance.

Discussing "average" public assistance rates for the Hmong, however, does not offer a clear picture of Hmong welfare utilization. There is great variation in welfare utilization from community to community, ranging from nearly 100% in Duluth, Minnesota, to no utilization at all in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

As might be predicted, where employment is higher, dependence is generally lower. In states where AFDC or general assistance is not available or is not sufficient for subsistence, the number of Hmong on welfare is very low, as in Texas, Arkansas and Georgia. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of secondary migration, those Hmong who cannot make it in these states tend to leave, either for better employment opportunities or other types of public assistance. In states such as Oregon and Washington, which offer AFDC, but not to intact families in which both parents are unemployed, dependence is somewhat lower, but not as low as where only very limited AFDC is available. There is also local variation of welfare utilization within jurisdictions with the same regulations and payment schedules.

Comparison of dependence across the seven case studies suggests that just as there are segments of Hmong communities who are more likely to be employed, certain segments of the Hmong population appear to depend on public assistance. These include widows, those injured during the war, and persons without previous education or work experience who are 50 years old or more. Large families are especially dependent on welfare assistance.

In October 1981, the Orange County Department of Social Services conducted a self-sufficiency study of refugee adults who had applied for aid initially in July and August of 1979 (County of Orange, 1982). The

study profiles those refugees in Orange County who were most likely to become self-sufficient during that time and those least likely. Of those who became self-sufficient, 48% were single adults, 41% were fathers, 7% mothers and 4% children 16-21. Of those who had not become self-sufficient, 14% were single adults, 62% fathers, 20% mothers. The most likely of the group to become self-sufficient were single adults, the least likely were mothers and fathers.

In the Orange County study, households which stayed on welfare longer had larger families and less English proficiency. There were no self-sufficient refugees in that study who had eight or nine children. Families headed by mothers and those with over five children were shown as especially vulnerable to long-term dependence. Ninety-five percent of those who had become self-sufficient after the 2 years were literate, whereas only 7.9% of those who were not self-sufficient were literate.

The profiles of dependence for the Orange County study correspond closely to a fairly representative profile of a large number of Hmong household heads: They have large families and have limited education with few literacy skills. For Hmong who contend with low-paying jobs, layoffs and large families, staying off welfare is a monumental struggle. As a Hmong welfare worker put it: "I don't know, it seems we are going backward instead of ahead."

The data at hand suggest that there are demonstrable interrelationships between Hmong welfare utilization and employment, relationships that involve a number of factors including work and welfare policies, payment amounts, and cost of living. These often controversial issues are considered more closely in the following pages.

Attitudes toward welfare. Across the country, in group meetings and as individuals, Hmong repeatedly expressed the concern that American people think they are "lazy" because many are dependent on welfare.

One man in Minnesota pointed out:

Many Americans say that the Hmong are lazy and they do not want to work. Hmong do not like to hear that. If the Hmong get a chance to have a job and they turn out to be lazy, then the Americans can say that. But the Hmong do not have jobs, no chance to work, so how can people say they are lazy? Everybody wants to work.

A Hmong woman now working in a day-care center declared:

The Hmong people are not lazy. We used to work 10 or 12 hours a day. We came to this country, and no matter how much you are willing to work, there are no jobs. That makes some people think that Hmong people don't want to work, but that is not so. If there were jobs everyone would work, I think.

In general, welfare is regarded by the Hmong as temporary help toward eventual independence--it is not expected to last forever. Welfare is regarded as a beneficial and necessary help for old and disabled people, and for widows with no other means of support. Some regard welfare assistance as part of the American promise made in Laos to help the Hmong after the war.

Although there is some maneuvering to stay on welfare if people have no jobs, almost everyone agreed that they would rather be working. According to Hmong informants, it is difficult for the Hmong, used to a self-sufficient lifestyle, to be dependent. By and large there is a strong desire to "get off" welfare, to be self-sufficient again as they were in Laos, and to join the American workforce. Along with dependence comes a growing sense of worthlessness and depression for once proud individuals who now find nothing to do but "stay home." A few representative views of welfare and work:

I have to apply for welfare to feed my family. Being on welfare is not something that I like either. It is a necessity only and I even feel guilty. Sir! You know which way you want me to walk on, other than being on welfare; you know a better way to cope with life in this country, anything at all to improve my new life in America. I want to follow and be like Americans. Thanks.

* * *

I understand that welfare money comes from all American taxpayers. I don't want to depend on it too long.

* * *

Welfare has no alternative. There are no jobs, nothing else, it's the only thing we can depend on, but we don't like to.

* * *

I want assistance from welfare because I want education if I ever want to get a job. Life in this country is very hard to support myself. After I get an education, I can work. I never thought about being on welfare forever.

* * *

Even if I don't know English, I will work where the employer is willing to use sign language. I am willing to work.

Some more cynical informants compare cash assistance to the rice that Americans dropped from the air over their country after the rice fields were destroyed by war: One day, the rice stopped coming. In April 1982, when Refugee Cash Assistance was cut for many, insecurity about the future deepened.

Even though few Hmong believe that their welfare dependence is in any sense their own fault, some Hmong are concerned that continued dependence may become a habit that will be increasingly difficult to break in future years. Although many Hmong see welfare as a temporary support system, designed to facilitate their adjustment and acquisition of the English language and of marketable job skills, others feel the immediate need to get off of welfare. The groups that very deliberately planned to move to

Fort Smith to facilitate attainment of self-sufficiency wanted desperately to break the dependence they were experiencing in California.

One of the older men from Fort Smith commented on this:

I came to America in September, 1976. First I lived in Santa Ana and got on welfare. Then I moved to Kansas City. I still got welfare. My life did not change. From 1976 until I moved to Arkansas I received assistance every day. I kept account of what I received; in 7 years I received \$49,800 from the government. It made me lazy and it made me sad. My family received almost \$50,000, but it did not help me to rebuild my life. In Fort Smith, we plan a new way. Not like the old welfare way. For the welfare I thank the government, but I thank you only a little bit, not a lot. We need help in another way than welfare. We came to the United States to learn new things. What do we learn? I learn how to be lazy and wait for other people to feed me.

If we have land we can be self-sufficient. We would not need anyone to help us. In Laos there was no land ownership. You can move each year, but in America all the land has owners. You can buy land, but for that we, the Hmong, need help. That is the kind of help we want, not welfare. Will the government help us to stabilize our life in America? Or will we be the poor people forever?

Another comment from Fort Smith:

All the Hmong know that welfare is like a fruit tree. It bears fruit and then the tree is empty. The fruit is there for just one season and then it is gone. The fruit is not forever. Welfare is like that. It only stays for the people who can't help themselves.

A man in Portland with an adequate job (\$850 a month take home) and a family of seven had this perception of welfare:

First, public assistance in exchange for nothing makes a person lazy. Hmong people should do any kind of work in exchange for money. The worst thing is to just sit home and receive money. Second, if you get a job it should pay more than welfare. And if that job does not pay enough to cover medical costs or come with benefits, then medical care should be continued. Third, all of the money that has been spent on welfare for the Hmong could have been spent on land and the implements necessary to farm that land. Hmong could have become self-sufficient. The money could have been used to buy tractors and land rather than to pay people to stay home.

Disincentives to work and education. A prime issue in both short-term and long-term dependence on public assistance is that public assistance offers major disincentives to work and education for Hmong families on welfare. These disincentives are particularly strong for large families and grow as the cost of living increases, full-time jobs at good wages continue to be difficult to obtain, and medical benefits are not paid.

The Hmong are acutely aware of the double bind they are placed in by the present assistance structure: If they want to start work gradually and build up experience and skills to obtain better jobs and wages so that their families will no longer have to depend on public assistance and if they work over 100 hours per month, they must often live on less money than welfare payments, often not even enough to meet rent and basic expenses. In addition, without the medical care welfare families receive, those working at minimum wages risk not having sufficient health care for their children, something very few parents are willing to do.

Hmong individuals and leaders repeatedly lamented the high odds against escaping dependence. They see an incipient welfare dependence cycle developing that needs to be stopped now. Many expressed a willingness to work for any amount if they could be assured of medical insurance until they could afford it on their own. Others cannot make ends meet with minimum wage jobs and large families and must return to welfare. There is simply too much risk and too much financial disincentive to get away from welfare. The disincentives to work are particularly vexing to the Hmong--the great majority of whom would prefer work over welfare. One told us: "It seems the welfare system is designed to keep us down."

In recent months, the Orange County Department of Social Services (DSS) has held workshops to help families leave welfare dependence in "steps": The strategy is to have the person who is not registered as the primary wage earner (usually a woman) work, while the primary wage earner works less than 100 hours per month, until enough security, income and possibly medical benefits can be built up before going off welfare. So far, according to a DSS administrator, the seminars do not seem to be successful, possibly because they involve a very complicated family budget and management system.

The dynamics of work disincentives are summed up in the following short account, related by a highly motivated Hmong man. This 45-year-old man's welfare and work experience are a good example of how the interrelationships between welfare regulations, low wages and high rent in Orange County make permanent self-sufficiency so difficult even for Hmong who have experience and marketable skills:

Now I am not working and stay on welfare for full assistance. I receive \$601 cash and \$98 Food Stamps and full medical coverage for my family of four people. I used to work . . . as a boat painter right after my 6 months ESL and 3 months vocational training as a woodworker. I worked for this company for 2-1/2 years. I started at \$3.15 an hour and by the time I left I was getting \$4.50 and earned about \$604 net pay per month. However, at that time I still received medical coverage and Food Stamps while working. The welfare regulations required that if I worked more than 100 hours a week, I would not be eligible to receive any assistance at all. My worker gave me the advice that if I wanted to continue medical insurance, I should quit my job. Of course, because I cannot afford weekly doctor bills, I quit the job and applied for the whole thing again.

My employer was sad to lose me. He said I'm the best employee in the company. He told me that whenever I want to go back to work then just let him know. He welcomes me at any time. I cannot go back to work, though, because rent is too high. Everything's increasing, including medical care and utilities. I have already figured out that the income does not cover my daily expenses.

As I can see, the welfare system is not a program designed to offer the opportunity for people to become self-supporting. At least

welfare should help to pay the difference of the average family's monthly expenses, so the working person has a chance to hold his job longer until his wage increases enough to support his family. For example, if welfare could have helped me with medical coverage, I think my income would have increased enough by now to cover medical insurance and maybe I would no longer have to depend on welfare.

If welfare would help me with medical care, then I would rather go back to work and get some more experience than go to school. In the future, I want to work as a carpenter because it is related to the experience I had in Laos so it would be easier for me to improve as a professional. To look for this job, I will go to the local agency for job referral, or go to EDD for job search. I will look for a permanent job, with good pay, so I will never have to go back on welfare again.

Another man gave the following opinion:

Welfare's good, a good way to help temporarily, but it can't help you forever. In some ways it's OK. Welfare should help the working family more than the people who don't work. If you are one person in the family working, and if your welfare is cut off and you have a large family, maybe you would rather stay on welfare, because you can't make enough money to support the family by working. The welfare system makes people lazy. I know many examples of this. Five Hmong people used to work where I work, and they did not earn as much as welfare could give them. They quit, moved to California. Even if you earn \$4.00 an hour and have a big family, that's not enough to support, or as much as welfare. For example, you might get \$500.00 a month working, but get \$800.00 a month [on welfare] with a large family. My idea is that welfare should give more money to people who are working than those who are not working. It should make people who are working feel like they want to work. Not just Hmong or refugees, but for Americans, too. If they did like that, everybody would want to work.

Similar issues are to be found in the Twin Cities. A man there stated:

We have one problem and that is not enough money. From the time we arrived in 1979 we had government help for quite a while, but since April of this year (1982) and up until now, I don't have enough money because I don't earn much and I have a large family. We are receiving nothing from the government now. I am working 5 hours a day. Since it adds up to just over 100 hours a month, I don't qualify for any help from the government, just the same as if I were working full-time. But with 100 hours of work a month, at a pay rate of \$5.19 an hour, I can earn only a little more than \$500 a month. I don't have any benefits or medical insurance.

Welfare also poses disincentives to those wishing to run small businesses, including farming. In Fresno, for example, many Hmong want

to try farming. But the hazards of weather, disease, unpredictable crop markets and prices represent significant risks for the Hmong entrepreneurs. These risk factors are multiplied, of course, by their unfamiliarity with modern agricultural techniques, equipment and marketing. In addition, welfare regulations impose a monumental burden on the small Hmong farmer and family: Farmers on welfare lose cash and medical benefits as soon as they go into business for themselves. If the designated primary wage earner (usually the husband) works on someone else's farm (e.g., a friend's or relative's), his or her welfare eligibility becomes subject to the 100 hour limitation (even if no wages are paid during that time period). Since income from farming generally does not appear until after harvest, the loss of cash and medical benefits during the long pre-harvest period is usually financially impossible or too risky at best for Hmong families. Many more Hmong would try farming if more flexible welfare policies were in effect; the total (rather than graduated) loss of benefits prevents many families from taking the very step that might lead to eventual self-sufficiency. It is one of the biggest complaints heard in Fresno.

For Hmong youth and adolescents who arrived in this country 2 or 3 years ago without any previous education, catching up to the educational level of their American peers often takes them past their eighteenth birthday. If their families are on public assistance, the families are faced with severe financial burdens if these students wish to remain in school until they graduate. This is of grave concern to Hmong parents. For example, under present assistance structures in California and other states, if a student is part of a family's AFDC grant, turns 18 and will not graduate by his or her nineteenth birthday, he or she will be cut

from the grant. Normally, any needy person in California can apply for General Relief (GR) assistance, and 18-year-olds can receive GR, but only if they are "employable," that is, not in school and available for work, because of the strict work program and work search provision of GR. To finish high school, young people must live with their families or relatives, adding another expense to an already marginal welfare budget. War orphans who have been living with other families are especially reluctant to place this much of a burden on their relatives. For all young people, resources with which to buy school supplies and books are extremely scarce. Many drop out of school to look for work and, ironically enough, eventually apply for assistance, because without an adequate education, they have great difficulty finding jobs. A bilingual aide in a Santa Ana school estimates that of those students whose AFDC aid is terminated while they are still in school, 90% do not graduate. Both parents and elders, who look to youth for their future support, see the lack of financial assistance to finish high school as one of the most egregious and far reaching problems facing the new generation of Hmong.

Effects of Welfare Dependence on Family Structures

Even in the short time since the Hmong have come to this country, effects of welfare dependence on the family structure have been felt in some communities. An elder in Orange County complained that the "welfare system is breaking up traditional family structures." Young people who turn 18 and no longer are part of the AFDC grant, but cannot yet work to help support their parents often feel they must therefore leave the household. A middle-aged man related that his daughter got married "just to help out the family," which could not afford basic expenses. If these

young people stay at home, they may become afraid to let anyone know they are living there. Several young people over 18 who were still living at home in Orange County said that they were afraid to fill out any forms or job applications that required them to give their address, because they thought that if welfare found out they were living with their parents, the family grant would be reduced further for rent the children were supposed to be paying. However, Orange County DSS staff stated that these fears were unfounded, as the grant amounts had already been cut for the 18-year-olds and would not be cut further, though 10% of any rent the young people did pay would be considered "income" for the families. Thus, lack of adequate information about regulations may be causing stress on traditional family structures.

A more serious disruption is occurring in a few families. In Portland, where, as noted, there is no AFDC-U program and the economy has been slow to recover from the serious downturn experienced, separation of husbands and wives has occurred in a limited number of cases. This response to such economic pressures occurs among other, non-Hmong groups. Most Hmong households, however, have resisted taking this step, and Americans familiar with the Hmong, Hmong leaders and welfare caseworkers in Portland all agreed that in the few households where parents had made a decision to separate in order to survive economically, the decision appeared to be temporary. Welfare was not viewed as a long-term, easy way to get money. Rather, separation to receive AFDC was a desperate last resort, which would be terminated as soon as successful employment was achieved. The actual number of households that had made this decision was not known, but this practice was not considered prevalent.

Vocational Training

Hmong have taken advantage of job training opportunities across the country. Some of these job training programs have been refugee-specific, others have been within the regular local community college offerings, CETA programs or Job Corps. A very few individuals, residing only in areas where there are large numbers of Hmong, have been able to attend job training that is taught bilingually or geared especially to Hmong skills and needs. Such training opportunities include electronics assembly courses offered in Orange County, sewing classes for Hmong women in the Twin Cities and a newly started farm training project in Fresno.

From informal polls taken at meetings of household heads across the country, it appears that about 10-20% of the household heads have received some kind of training; in Minnesota, however, the figure is higher--about 40%. These figures seem to apply only to men, however. Proportionately, very few Hmong women have had any job training in this country, according to the informal polls taken at the women's meetings for this Study. Women cite child care responsibilities and inadequate language and literacy training as the primary reasons for not being able to attend formal job training.

Even using the highest estimates of the numbers of Hmong who have received job training and been placed successfully on appropriate jobs, it is safe to say that less than 15% of Hmong household heads, on an average, have been successfully retrained in vocational education programs. Hmong who have taken vocational training have most commonly been trained in skilled industrial trades such as the very popular machinist training, welding, carpentry, auto mechanics, electronics

assembly and industrial sewing. A wide range of training opportunities have been utilized. Now there are Hmong in the U.S., whether employed or unemployed, who have received formal training in this country in such diverse skills as grounds maintenance, secretarial work, and accounting.

Nationwide, Hmong plead for more opportunities to be trained for full participation in the American work force. A high value is placed on vocational education, and it is often cited among reasons for secondary migration. One reason that St. Paul became such a large Hmong center is that Hmong considered the job training there very good and the first who were trained there were able to secure excellent jobs as machinists. As mentioned before, false information on job training was also a reason many Hmong came to the Central Valley of California.

Difficulty in gaining access and in staying in training, length of training, inappropriate training for the job market and inadequate placement assistance are the major obstacles in the success of vocational training for the Hmong. Hmong who have not had any previous education and have limited literacy and English abilities have found it difficult to be accepted into regular job training programs sponsored by local CETA (now JTPA) programs or community vocational technical schools, since these programs often require good English skills and often substantial math skills also. Even in programs especially funded for refugee students, a certain level of previous education is often assumed if not required. Hmong must compete with other more urban and educated refugees for the limited slots available. Hmong informants report that the amount of training allowed is often inadequate to prepare them for the intended job.

A nationwide training problem for Hmong, though one not limited to refugee job training, is lack of appropriate job placement at the end of the training. Of the Hmong men who have received job training (as reported in the meetings of household heads during the fieldwork for the seven case studies), less than half have been placed in appropriate jobs. Finding appropriate work varies from place to place: Virtually none of the trained workers works in Fresno, but a third of those in Minnesota work in jobs for which they were trained. Part of this placement problem is that many persons are trained for jobs that are not available at the end of the training. For example, in two locales Hmong were trained in furniture and upholstery making--these were popular programs with Hmong men, since they utilized existing manual skills--but there were no jobs to be filled at the end of training. A related problem is the frequent lack of follow-up after training, e.g., placement assistance or further training in job-search skills. One job trainer at an electronics assembly training program geared especially to Hmong reported that she was concerned that if students completing their program did not get a job for six months to a year, they would get discouraged and give up, but probably could still retain the skills learned.

Job trainers reported that the Hmong in their classes were very quick to learn by demonstration but had more difficulty in sections of classes that required textbook preparation or math word problems. Throughout this Study, Hmong individuals related their confidence in their ability to learn quickly by doing, their traditional way of gaining new skills. A man in Southern California who had just been laid off after 4 years on the job in a gem-cutting tool company described his experience:

USCC found me my job. There were no Hmong people there then. At the beginning they just showed me what to do. They don't talk too much, so I don't need English. . . . Some people, they need to read instructions to know how to do something, but for myself, I can look at it, and I know. It's in my head.

And a woman working at a child care center was proud of her job skills, learned on the job.

I work at a child care center. To be a child care worker, you must have a certain [school] degree. But there are four Hmong women working there too as child care aides and they work at the same level. They just show us how to do something one time, and we can do it.

Because of the confidence in learning by doing and the difficulties experienced when job training was found to be inappropriate to labor market demand or problems were experienced in job search, many leaders and other individuals suggested that further job training for Hmong should be very closely tied to actual employment, such as on-the-job training sponsored either by employers or by public programs, which guarantee employment at the end of training. One young man spoke up at a group meeting:

I am concerned about job training. I have a lot of friends who finished training but never got a job. We need companies to guarantee jobs after training. If the company helps in training, in a few years everyone will have a job.

Hmong see a great need for bilingual job training, as it would benefit those who seem to have the most difficulty locating jobs--older individuals with limited English skills.

Sometimes the absence of job training promotes secondary migration, as the following account demonstrates. A couple who came to Providence directly from Thailand in 1976 moved to Minnesota 3 years later when the wife was laid off her job. They moved because they had heard the Twin Cities offered good training--and they had a brother and other relatives

there. In Minnesota they learned English and both trained to be machinists. When the wife could not find a job in St. Paul as a machinist, they moved back to Providence. They found jobs themselves through the newspaper. The husband earns \$4.50 an hour at a watch company and the wife earns \$4.35 an hour at a jewelry company. They both would like to work as machinists some day. Their story says St. Paul has good job training, but not jobs; Rhode Island has jobs but no training. This family artfully combined the best of both worlds. Together they earn nearly \$10 an hour. They live on the first floor of a house owned by the wife's brother-in-law and are fully self-sufficient.

Barriers to Employment

Especially in the recent recession, Hmong, like their unemployed American neighbors, are experiencing difficulties in finding employment. As noted, Hmong are often employed in minimum wage jobs, and the jobs that they have secured are particularly vulnerable to layoffs in hard economic times. Unlike other unemployed, however, Hmong experience unique barriers in trying to find jobs. A discussion of the major barriers identified during this Study follows.

English skills. Hmong cite inadequate English skills as the number one impediment to employment. On the whole, unemployed Hmong feel their English is not good enough to find out about jobs announced by public advertising, to fill out job applications without help, to get through a job interview, and sometimes to communicate on the job. Even if they locate a job that might not require any English skills while working, applying for it is a major hurdle, especially for Hmong with no literacy skills. Once on the job many feel they could learn by demonstration or

be helped by another bilingual Hmong. Lack of English or underconfidence in English capabilities leads some Hmong to become discouraged and give up looking for work.

The problem of course feeds on itself--each time someone tries to speak English and is misunderstood or told he or she is not qualified because of lack of English, confidence in one's abilities is undermined just a bit more. The Hmong Community Survey in the Twin Cities found, in fact, that of the 62% of unemployed Hmong who said they were not now actively looking for work, almost one-third (32%) said they are not looking because of limited English (Olney, 1983).

Hmong perceptions that lack of English is a hindrance in finding employment are not unfounded. In a survey of employers conducted in Orange County (Baldwin, 1982) in 1981, the number one disadvantage of hiring refugees that employers listed was "language communication problems." In an article in the Los Angeles Times of January 9, 1983, "Employers and Refugees Gain Something in Translation," a job developer at a refugee job center said, "Many big companies now are kind of saturated with refugees. I think they feel they've done their share. I think a lot are tired of the language problem" (Berkman, 1983).

Persons who have been working since they arrived and have not studied English have a particularly hard time finding new jobs:

I and my wife came directly from Thailand [refugee camp] to Utah June 6, 1979, sponsored by an American family. We both are illiterate in our language, because we did not have a chance to learn at all.

Only a week after we arrived in Utah, our sponsor found us employment picking and sorting mushrooms. We received about \$250 each week per person. The wage was based upon the number of containers of mushrooms that we picked. We both hoped that the job would help us to build a new life in the United States as we had dreamed. We advised each other frequently to work hard and be patient and try to avoid all troubles.

We worked for the company for 3 years and 4 months and had no problems. One day, it was the month of November 1982, the employer complained that my wife had done a container of mushrooms that was improperly sorted. The employer then told my wife to go home right away. My wife was crying and begged to stay, to work, but the employer told her that she had to go home and employer would let her know when she would come back to work.

Later on that day, the company fired both me and my wife, we asked and cried to stay on the job, but there was no consideration to be made. The company also gave us a bad check for our last check which we could not cash. When we had been laid off and had no income for a living, we went to welfare, but welfare referred us to the EDD to apply for unemployment benefits. We went there to apply for it, but the employer informed EDD that we quit the job voluntarily, so the EDD denied our application.

A hearing had been set up twice by the EDD, but we did not know how to deal with it and also we thought we should not fight against the government no matter if we were right or wrong, because we lost our country and should always respect who we defended. To give or to take is up to them.

To lose this job, it brought us great misfortune. Now we go on to welfare for help. We are eligible for cash and Food Stamps, but the worker said that we are not eligible for a medical sticker, because we are too old.

Since my wife and I were laid off our jobs in Utah, we have been seeking work in any unskilled position that does not require more than limited knowledge of the English language.

Related to the problem of lack of English skills are communication problems in interviews or the job that have to do with cultural differences. These problems can prevent Hmong from advancing on the job. In an employment survey conducted in Minnesota (Literacy 85, 1983), results of communication problems were outlined in an interview of an employer of 18 Hmong in leather goods manufacturing:

The job advancement prospects for Hmong workers at the factory are limited because of their communication handicaps. In order to become a supervisor, an employee must be able to communicate effectively with other workers. In addition, as a cultural group, the Hmong are perceived as not having the "assertiveness" required to handle aggressive, verbal, difficult-to-manage young American or Cuban workers typical of the factory workers. The

personnel manager called this lack of assertiveness a language problem. His description, however, was of a cultural conflict--a question of modes of behavior and values.

Job skills. The skills Hmong brought with them from their traditional economy in Laos and from their experience as soldiers are not always transferrable to the demands of American technological society without additional formal or on-the-job training. Added to the language and literacy barrier, lack of marketable skills has made locating appropriate jobs particularly difficult. Some employment programs and employers have successfully turned existing Hmong skills to productivity in jobs in this country; these examples are discussed in the following section. For those Hmong who have no access to retraining or help finding jobs that suit their present skills, lack of marketable skills is seen as a major problem. The difference between the work they did in Laos and the work people do here looks to them like an unbridgeable gulf. In the following letter, written in Hmong and presented at a group meeting and later translated into English, a man expressed his feelings of inability to support himself because of his background as a farmer, his limited English skills and his resultant lack of self-esteem.

I am Hmong, not Laotian. I am glad to tell you . . . that I had food and clothes and everything in my country. Because the Americans came to my country and built the war there, now I have no country and have nothing. I am very poor. The reason I came to this country is that I have no parents. The communists came and tried to kill us so I didn't like it; then I had to escape. I am so dumb. I don't know the language, and I have to be on welfare. My family has altogether seven people. When I stayed in Laos I was a farmer. I was stupid, I could do nothing else. I had all the things I wanted. I never begged anyone for food. Only when I came to the country of America I had to beg and ask all the time. I am so dumb; I cannot think of anything to do plus I do not know the language. It is very hard. Because it's the language itself that I don't have, I cannot do anything else to help my family, so welfare is my only choice. I like to ask

you to see if you can help me with anything. I like to ask you if you can help my life to be like Americans' [lives]. Please love me and my family.

Unfamiliarity with job skills for the American job market is related to the problem of job search skills. Finding jobs in this country is a difficult, often painful process even for skilled and experienced American workers and the tasks of locating jobs, filling out job applications and going through interviews are formidable tests to Hmong who lack English and a knowledge of appropriate job search strategies. During the course of this Study, many unemployed Hmong expressed the need for someone to accompany them to the job site and help them through the application process.

One man now working in Portland found the employment placement programs in Portland inadequate for his job-search needs and found a job by himself. He is especially motivated, and his English is good. His story, told in English, ends successfully for him but demonstrates the difficulty of locating jobs:

I got laid off (in Vancouver, Washington) and moved to Portland. Employment helped me find a job from August to October in a place like a church doing everything, cleaning, fixing, like that. I didn't work from October to January 1983. I was laid off, I went for emergency help. Emergency can't help. Welfare can't help because I don't have children. I thought, 'Everything is going wrong, I don't know how to go.' Nobody helped me, so I just went to companies. I went around everywhere--restaurants, hotels, everything. I parked near and walked in and asked if they have work for me. If you buy newspapers, you go and lots of people take the job first. Everyday I went to ten or twenty places, I think altogether it was several hundred places. Sometimes I go to find a job, and they say, "I'm sorry I can't help you, you don't know English." I got my job on January 12. I work in a frame shop (making picture frames). They trained me on the job. I cut wood, putty something, work with wood and plastic.

Discrimination. In some locales, Hmong perceive discrimination against them in hiring. Though it is very hard to prove employment discrimination, enough examples of obvious racial discrimination were gathered during this Study to conclude that this is an added barrier to employment for the Hmong, though very seldom are Hmong singled out as a distinct ethnic group. In addition, the perception of being discriminated against, true or false, often discourages people from seeking jobs or job advancement. "Let's face it," one employer of Hmong, himself an Asian American, told us, "discrimination is a fact of life."

Strategies for Finding Work

The cold-calling approach of the man whose job search was related above is not the usual way employed Hmong have found jobs. Interviews with working people, leaders and employment services providers indicate that there are a few common approaches to finding work. These include self-search (probably the most difficult for the least educated), referral from friends and relatives, and using sponsors, refugees and state employment services.

Hmong friends and relatives. Word of mouth about job openings in worksites where one Hmong already is employed is probably the most successful means of locating employment. Employers who have hired one Hmong and are pleased with his or her performance are less hesitant about taking on more Hmong workers. Also, the first Hmong employed typically have had enough English skills to get through an interview and be trained on the job, and they in turn can help translate. These job-finding strategies which use traditional Hmong social networks tend to suffer when one Hmong worker gets laid off (or leaves), since the links of

communication with employers depend on some Hmong already being employed. The extent of this interdependence is illustrated by the story of a man who had been working as a telephone lineman. He had a bilingual Hmong supervisor and had good pay and benefits. His Hmong supervisor quit and the lineman had to leave, since his communication link with his employer had been broken. A luckier example is of the Portland man above who found his job at the picture frame business, did very good work and spoke some English. Just a few months later the employer, who previously had no Hmong in his shop, hired two more Hmong workers.

A supervisor of an electronics assembly factory described a similar situation:

The first Hmong came here by an ad in the newspaper. Now we don't need to advertise, because Hmong workers tell their friends this is a good place to work and people come in and fill out applications. There are about 60 applications on file. As far as I'm concerned, if I need a worker, English isn't the first requirement; I only regret I can't hire more people who are waiting. Now, if we lost the one bilingual woman, there are other workers who could carry on as helpers with English.

2. Hmong man in Dallas commented on the role of friends:

We have found a lot of problems, not only in Texas, in looking for jobs because we don't have a lot of skill and also have poor language, and also don't have prior experience. And the economic recession is affecting a lot of Hmong people But still most people are employed here. There are only two ways that I have found employment in Texas. One, I have found that having a good reference or having a good job record and good recommendation from their former employers, that will put them on a job quite easily. Second, if any person does not have those qualifications they usually will start at a very low wage job, even a house cleaning job or something like that. But then after they have worked for one or two months I see they get promoted. The employer gets to know them and knows how much motivation they have and that they are willing to learn, to make an effort and to make a contribution to the company, then they start to get promoted. I think that those are the ways that we find jobs around here.

Employment services. If there are job placement services available in areas where Hmong work, they use them. It appears that the key to successful Hmong participation and placement in these agencies, whether they are sponsored by VOLAGs or state or county entities, is Hmong bilingual personnel to help them. The Hmong expressed a need for bilingual help in agencies, because, as one man put it, "we need to have someone to tell the employer we have difficulty with English."

Employment services that rely on self-directed search have not been as successful for Hmong. Those that provide some orientation or help in filling out applications and getting through interviews, and provide translation services to help with initial training or problems are favored by the Hmong.

Various strategies have been tried by states and counties to increase job offers for refugees. In Minnesota, television ads were used; in Rhode Island, an actress active in refugee affairs was hired to speak to business groups to spread information about the advantages of hiring refugees. Some large companies, such as Fluor Corporation in Orange County and Control Data Corporation, have themselves initiated public relations or training efforts to improve employment prospects for refugees. The work of sponsors and concerned local residents in getting the first Hmong on the job is largely undocumented and difficult to measure, but interviews with Hmong individuals show that many gained their first job experiences in this country through the help of sponsors or friends. The research of Pullen and Ryan (1982b) confirms the important role of sponsors in finding early arrivals jobs.

Using Hmong skills. In spite of the high dependence rate among the overall Hmong population and the bleak employment profile in many areas,

numerous Hmong individuals have been successful in employment by transferring the skills they brought with them from Laos or learning new skills through vocational training. Some of the effective job search strategies described above have also proved to be good ways to assure Hmong productivity and satisfaction at work.

Employers and employees alike have found that the bilingual lead person or work team leader approach is especially effective for training Hmong employees and helping to assure smooth, ongoing communication between employers and Hmong employees. Several refugee programs such as those operated by the Southeast Asian Refugee Federation (SEARF) in Portland, the Vietnamese American Association in Oklahoma City, Refugees in Search of Employment (RISE) in the Twin Cities and the Hmong mutual assistance associations (MAAs) throughout the country have helped to keep Hmong on the job by providing free translation services to employers, if only one Hmong is on the job at a certain worksite and his or her English is minimal.

Where programs or employers have actively sought to utilize or build on existing Hmong skills in a creative way, both Hmong and their employers seem to have benefited. This approach to Hmong employment requires, however, a certain amount of cultural sensitivity on the part of the employers, a real knowledge of skills labor market demands, and a commitment to using Hmong skills on the part of employment programs. Certain employers have sought out Hmong for their traditional skills, particularly crafting skills. The "Literacy 85" survey of refugee employees in Minnesota (1983) described an example of such a situation, that of a leather goods manufacturer employing 15 Hmong out of 27 employees in its division:

All the Indochinese at the company are Hmong as a matter of policy. It was felt that the Hmong culture, being primarily a handcraft culture, was probably well-suited to the needs of hand-sewn boot making. This has proved to be true. While the Hmong are not the fastest workers at the factory, their work is very consistent and dependable. They are considered, overall, to be excellent employees and valued workers.

There are countless other examples of successful transfer of existing skills and successful experiences in the workplace. Other illustrative examples include a boat painter in Newport Beach (previously a carpenter in Laos), numerous women putting sewing skills to work in industrial sewing, a Hmong silversmith employed in the manufacture of precision tools for gem-cutting, and four mothers in Orange County working as day-care aides.

In every site visited, employers of Hmong were pleased with the attitudes and the quality of work of their Hmong employees. In a 1981 survey of Hmong employers in Minnesota, Hendricks and Richardson (1982) found:

. . . employers were asked, 'What do you think of Hmong as workers?' Twenty-five, or 86%, of the 29 respondents indicated the Hmong to be very good workers. In addition, many went on to state that the Hmong were 'some of the best workers they had.' This was particularly true in organizations where the Hmong were employed in assembly, or piecework occupations [e.g., computer assembly]. . . . In general, employers are impressed by the productivity of the Hmong. Initially there appears to be a period of some difficulty in training due to English language skills. Once trained, however, Hmong are reported to be better workers than the average American workers.

The personnel director of a large Portland, Oregon, manufacturing firm called the Hmong "exceptional employees." The same individual praised his firm's Hmong employees for their lack of turnover and near-perfect attendance. "In the past we had to hire 14 Americans to keep a 10-person crew filled each shift. When we began to hire Hmong

workers, we found we only needed 10 Hmong to keep a 10-person crew filled." An employer of Hmong in Providence stated:

I'll hire anybody who can work. The refugees have a good record. Every one of them follows company rules. They come to work every day and they do good quality work. They have excellent dexterity. The experienced ones train the new ones, and what amazes me is their loyalty. When we have to lay off and later call them back, they come, even if they have found another job. I hope the Hmong do not think of working here forever. They should realize that working here is not a very good job. I hope that they will improve themselves.

The combination of Hmong work attitudes that fit well with American employment values and existing skills, particularly in manual and precision work, could lead to more success in the workplace if other employment barriers are overcome.

Economic Development Projects

A fundamental part of the dream of "success" for many Americans is the possibility of owning and operating a small business. Hmong in this country recall with longing their independent lifestyle in the mountains of Laos where they were masters of their own destinies. In contemplating the problems involved in achieving economic self-sufficiency for the Hmong in the U.S., many Americans and Hmong see a connection between these two dreams and view entrepreneurial projects as the answer. To address the question of the role of such endeavors in the successful economic adjustment of Hmong here, an 8-month study of projects, enterprises and programs that serve to promote the economic self-sufficiency of the Hmong was conducted. The full report of the research may be found in Volume 2: Economic Development of the Hmong Resettlement Study's final reports. The findings are briefly summarized here.

The specific purposes of the economic study were to identify significant economic ventures across the country, to obtain information about them, to describe constraints and opportunities facing the ventures with respect to promoting self-sufficiency, to prepare indepth descriptions of a selection of promising projects and enterprises that highlight the key difficulties and successes that each encountered, and to draw from these experiences the basic lessons by participants--both Hmong and American.

The study found that the number of projects and enterprises in operation has increased significantly from about ten in 1980 to 82 at present. The first of these were sewing projects. In 1981 several grocery stores were established. Major farming projects began in 1982, as did half of the other types of businesses. The ventures are all quite new and, therefore, assessments concerning their abilities to make a sizeable difference in Hmong self-sufficiency should be considered very preliminary.

One-half of the current projects and enterprises are located in California and Minnesota. The rest are scattered thinly across another 15 states. Sewing projects (27) and grocery stores (30) dominate the ventures. Five of the 15 farming projects are still at very preliminary stages of execution, and only six of the ten other Hmong enterprises can be regarded as businesses in the strict sense of the word. The others are embryonic. Volume 2 reviews the 82 projects and enterprises, as well as four employment programs, and presents case studies of 22 of them, highlighting the difficulties each project has faced, the levels of success achieved and the major lessons learned.

Sewing projects. Most of the 27 sewing ventures began as attempts by interested Americans to market traditional crafts produced at home. Many have since diversified to produce novelty items that contain Hmong design patterns (e.g., eyeglass cases, tote bags, purses, etc.). A few have also diversified to sell custom and contract alteration and dressmaking services. One has gone as far as providing subcontract assembly work to a U.S. toy manufacturer (e.g., stuffed animals). On the average, the ventures provide supplementary income of about \$250 a year for each of the 1,500-1,800 Hmong women who participate or around \$500,000 a year in total. Individual women have earned up to \$4,000, but the majority generally make less than \$250 a year.

The study concluded that basic changes in the way these ventures are managed will be required before most of them can begin to provide significant income. A first priority is to shift emphasis from cultural preservation to income-generation; to run the ventures as if they were businesses. Within a business framework attention must shift from products to services because the former have much less enduring market value than the latter. Financial restructuring is also essential. The projects generate insignificant savings and are unable to accumulate capital for investment in new product research, equipment like sewing machines, advertising, etc. The U.S. textile product and services sector does not provide great opportunities for generating income, but the sewing ventures have come nowhere close to their potential in assisting Hmong women to earn income and develop marketable skills.

Farming projects. Among farming projects, small vegetable gardening schemes have proven themselves to be cost-effective means of generating supplementary in-kind and cash income to Hmong families, ranging in value

from \$100 to \$200 per family per season. Conclusions about large-scale undertakings that aim at complete family self-sufficiency from farming are impossible because such projects are only just beginning. Levels of initial capitalization of such schemes, from \$77,000 to \$1.4 million, suggest that current projects are unlikely to provide replicable examples of what is possible. Small self-sufficiency farms that in the Midwest might cost \$7,500 per family to get started have not yet appeared, and reasons may include lack of savings, insufficient agricultural skill, and absence of established retail marketing networks. In any case, current projects cover only about 220 families and may reach 300 in a year or two.

A strategy that focuses on small gardening schemes and that attempts to gradually build them up over time into full-fledged commercial operations can serve the purposes of savings formation, skill acquisition and market development and may in turn increase the probability of new farming venture creation. Learning about farming in this country is a slow process, and such activities cannot be counted on to make a significant difference in the overall self-sufficiency effort in the near future.

Food distribution enterprises. The 30 food distribution enterprises (one supermarket and 29 grocery stores) primarily began as food buying cooperatives that helped Hmong families obtain staples like rice and fish sauce. A few have since joined others in attempting to become profit-making ventures. Several have succeeded, but many still just break even or sustain losses leading to closure. Besides providing food cost savings that might total \$600,000 a year (i.e., having the same impact as sewing ventures), the stores constitute a source of future Hmong entrepreneurship. The store operators have asked for technical

help in learning about small business management, and it has been unfortunate that they, and many of the sewing project organizers who have also recognized their own limitations, have been unable to find appropriate assistance.

Other enterprises. The potential impact of assistance is manifest in the way that other enterprises have served the purposes of self-sufficiency. Several Hmong have tried and failed to make a go at business, but four of the ten still functioning establishments, most notably a security agency started with \$35,000, a pair of restaurants begun with \$140,000, and an industrial subcontracting firm set up with \$34,000, together provide around 120 jobs, mostly at the minimum wage. Although this may not seem like much, the \$850,000 that the jobs generate as income compares quite favorably with the other projects and enterprises discussed above.

Employment programs. The relative impact of the few foregoing enterprises underscores the importance of employment programs as the principal means to promote Hmong self-sufficiency. Indeed, the study's brief examination of only four of the many efforts that exist in the country reveals that at a total cost of about \$205,000, the programs have a capacity to introduce 780 refugees into the job market each year and provide them with \$5.5 million in earnings. All other projects and enterprises pale in comparison. Moreover, the evolution of other ventures depends largely on the rate of speed at which more Hmong find employment. Capital, investment ideas, and business skills all derive from prior employment experience in urban and rural areas.

The overarching conclusion of this research is that employment programs continue to offer the basic means of promoting rapid and

significant progress in meeting the goal of Hmong self-sufficiency, directly in terms of generating wages and salaries and indirectly in terms of generating savings, skill and experience that can be put to productive use in developing other projects and enterprises. Three years is hardly a sufficient period to conclude, as several Hmong and Americans have, that employment programs do not work. Besides the fact that failure to meet original expectations is probably a reflection of over-optimism and not of program performance, a major diversion of attention away from seeking all ways and means of improving employment programs will prove counterproductive because there is no reasonable alternative to such programs. Technical assistance to sewing projects can help those projects, as can management assistance to grocery stores and other enterprises. Such actions, however, should not divert attention away from job development, training and placement. Indeed, further financial and technical support of these last efforts is needed.

Acquisition of English in the United States

The Hmong in every community in this Study view the acquisition of English as a key to successful adjustment and attainment of self-sufficiency. They also see learning English as a major problem. This section will consider the role of English acquisition in Hmong resettlement in this country: Why does learning English seem so important and how important is it? The availability and utilization of English training will be discussed; how well the Hmong are learning and what appears to affect their abilities or their opportunities to learn will be explored; and recommendations will be made for improving the possibilities for the Hmong to learn English. Discussion of these aspects of English acquisition by the Hmong will first present findings common to Hmong resettlement around the nation and then examine differences among the communities studied.

The Importance of English Acquisition in Hmong Resettlement

When asked about the problems they face in this country, more often than not Hmong individuals will reply, "I don't know English!" or "My English is not good." In the survey of 305 Hmong households conducted in Minneapolis-St. Paul in 1982 (Olney, 1983), "English" was the problem most often named. (It was the first response of 58 percent of all participants and 71 percent of the women.) The second most often named problem was "no job" (the response of 46 percent of the participants). Indeed, English and employment are often so intertwined that it is difficult to consider them as separate issues. English is viewed as the prerequisite for entering vocational training programs,

finding a job and getting promoted on the job. Adequate English skills are also seen as critical to setting up a business or farming venture, obtaining higher education or further technical training, and gaining acceptance by Americans and making American friends.

Since knowledge of English is so closely tied to so many elements in refugee adjustment to life here, it should come as no surprise that many Hmong often use "English"--the language problem--as a symbol for the whole range of problems they encounter in their resettlement in this country. Problems such as lack of previous education or literacy skills, inexperience with the job-search process or the types of jobs available here, inadequate orientation to prevailing cultural expectations regarding on-the-job or interpersonal behavior, conflicting values (such as individual independence vs. "dependence" or familial responsibilities and obligations, traditional religious beliefs and practices vs. Western beliefs, differing legal practices)--all of these complex and disturbing problems can be covered with a phrase: "I can't speak English." Whether as a symbol for a multitude of overwhelming difficulties and worries or as an obstacle to a specific goal (such as getting a job with adequate pay), lack of English skills is considered one of the foremost problems of the Hmong in the U.S. today--both by the Hmong themselves as well as by service providers, employers and others working with the Hmong.

Research conducted prior to the community studies reported here illustrates the importance of English proficiency in attaining self-sufficiency. The study cited earlier conducted in Orange County in 1981 found that refugee households who stayed on welfare longer had larger families and less English proficiency. Ninety-five percent of those who had become self-sufficient within the 2-year period 1979-1981

were literate, whereas only 7.9 percent of those who were not yet self-sufficient were literate (County of Orange, 1982).

English and employment. In all of the communities studied, English proficiency was closely linked to the possibilities for employment. In communities in which relatively few Hmong are currently employed--such as the Twin Cities or Fresno--inadequate English skills are seen as the biggest barrier to finding a job. In areas of high employment, such as Fort Smith or Dallas-Fort Worth, where Hmong with little or no English skills have found jobs, English is still a key factor in determining the level of jobs and rate of pay. Also, when the threat of lay-offs looms, English proficiency takes on a major role in lay-off and rehiring decisions.

To a large extent, the formation and growth of the seven communities studied have been based on the relative priorities given to English training and employment both by Hmong community members and by resettlement planners and service providers. Although, as previously noted, there are many reasons for the phenomenal growth of the Hmong populations in the Twin Cities and in Fresno, a major drawing card has been the availability (or, in the case of Fresno, the rumored availability) of continued good quality English language training. In general, in the communities of Orange County, Providence, Fort Smith, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Portland (after the exodus to California), greater priority has been placed on obtaining employment as quickly as possible than on English training. The role of English proficiency in achieving employment for groups like the Hmong has been the subject of intense debate among refugee resettlement personnel across the country. Closer examination of the experiences of these seven communities with their

differing orientations will help to evaluate the importance of English acquisition in successful Hmong resettlement.

The household survey conducted in the Twin Cities in 1982 (cited above) found a striking correlation between Hmong adults' self-rated English proficiency and employment. As Figure I illustrates, in this Hmong community the percentage of individuals employed remains between 10 and 20%, whether they speak English a little or well, but rises to nearly 70% among individuals who speak English very well. Of course, the large number of Hmong in the Twin Cities and the generally poor economy there contribute to this correlation. Nevertheless, the fact remains that good English skills are highly correlated with having a job.

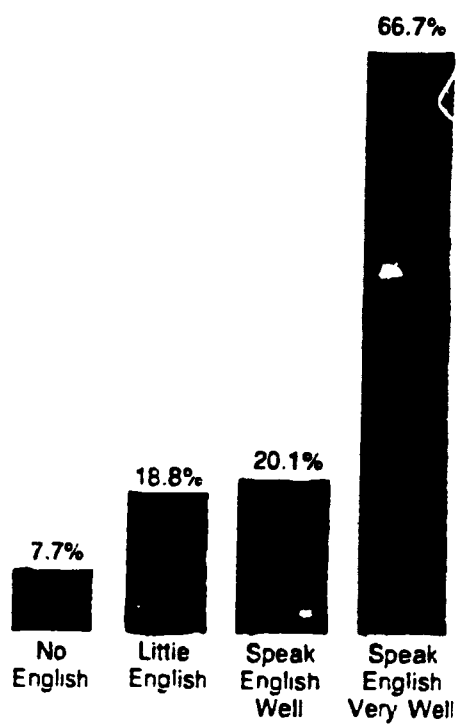
The importance of English in obtaining employment for the Hmong in the Twin Cities is recognized by the State of Minnesota in its welfare policies, by resettlement workers and by the Hmong themselves. Among the requirements for eligibility for General Assistance is that the recipient is "a person unable to secure suitable employment due to inability to communicate in English." A resettlement worker who works closely with the Hmong summarized the importance of English for them:

Hmong say that their problems are no English and no jobs. Adult Hmong would go to school full-time for English if they had the opportunity. They have a love for learning. There is the attitude that if they can speak English everything else will work out. They will get a job and many of their personal problems will be taken care of. They will be able to make it on their own. As it is now, they cannot operate as individuals—they always need outside help to deal with the world.

One of the Hmong men interviewed, the head of a large family, had this to say about learning English:

Life is very difficult for me. Language is the worst problem. Without English I cannot get a job. I don't like to live off the government. I have looked for a job many times. My teacher

FIGURE 1
JOB IN U.S. BY SELF-RATED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY:
TWIN CITIES HMONG HOUSEHOLD HEADS



(an ESL teacher at a local church) is helping me. I am taking an English class at the church now. But I need training to get a job. I really doubt that the Americans will ever hire me. I would like to go back to Laos.

Fresno presents a similar case. Many Hmong state that one reason they came to California was because they heard there were plentiful opportunities for English language training there. Indeed, some left jobs in other communities in hope of obtaining more English training which, they assumed, would help them secure a better future for themselves and their families. This association of English proficiency with employment seems well-founded in the Fresno community. Although part-time farm workers and self-employed farmers do get by without a command of English, almost all other available jobs in the area require English skills which most Hmong do not have. As an employment counselor noted,

Actually, there are jobs out there, but Hmong are not qualified. Schools, hospitals, private clinics and other related service jobs for Hmong are available from time to time, but Hmong do not have enough language skills to be qualified . . . Hmong need English and job training.

In group meetings in Fresno, individuals were asked to prioritize between language training and job training (in case there were not sufficient funds to provide both). In every case, the consensus was that English language training would help them more in their search for employment. This priority grows out of the collective experience of these Hmong: Reports abound about (1) individuals who completed job training elsewhere but were unable to find work, and (2) individuals who had jobs but eventually were laid off because of "language problems."

Although in the other five communities a very different orientation and experience has evolved regarding emphasis on employment or language

training, the "wisdom" of the Fresno viewpoint unfortunately is becoming apparent to many Hmong in those communities. Initial enthusiasm for immediate employment with the hope that better English skills would come with time and exposure has dampened considerably as Hmong have seen themselves locked into entry-level jobs which do not provide as much income or health insurance as public assistance would, or as they have been laid off when the economy soured and have been unable to compete for other jobs due to lack of sufficient English skills. (As will be discussed further below, in general the Hmong have not been able to improve their English on the job because of the Catch-22 situation of getting jobs in which little English is required and then not knowing enough English to advance.)

Many Hmong originally came to Orange County because of its reputation for having jobs in which little English was needed. The economy was strong, the area wealthy, and about 60% of the Hmong were able to get jobs. However, after 1981 the economy turned downward and many Hmong were laid off. Many had been working since their arrival there in 1979, had never attended English classes, and did not use English on the job. For them, finding new jobs was a frightening and difficult prospect. Their view of the importance of English changed radically. One Hmong welfare worker said that English is felt to be so important in getting good jobs that some people will postpone looking for jobs if they can go to school to learn more English. This perception of the importance of English in securing employment does not appear exaggerated. The survey cited earlier which was conducted by the Immigrant and Refugee Planning Center in 1981 in Orange County (Baldwin, 1982) asked employers to list the major advantages and disadvantages of hiring Indochinese. The number one disadvantage listed was "language communication problems."

In Providence, Dallas-Fort Worth and Fort Smith, entry-level jobs have also been available to Hmong with limited English skills. In these communities, refugee training policies have discouraged placing a higher priority on English training than on employment. In both Providence and the Dallas-Fort Worth area, non-native English speakers have long played a role in the economy. In Providence, English language training has never been considered as an alternative to employment. In Texas it is well known that you don't have to speak English to get a job. The local service provider attitude toward ESL is well expressed by this remark from a VOLAG employee:

After the refugees have been here for awhile they pick up more English. Only a few insist on getting ESL before they work. There was one Hmong woman, healthy and strong and able to work, who wanted to be given 3 months of ESL before she went to work. But ESL is just an emotional crutch--it's necessary if a person thinks it is.

Although English has not been necessary in the past to get a job in Texas, the situation is changing. In a meeting with household heads in Dallas, English language ability was mentioned as an important factor in obtaining a job. While nearly all families have at least one person working, there have been recent lay-offs. The Hmong did not feel that English ability had been a factor in the lay-offs, but they did feel that it will be a factor in finding a new job, given the present state of the economy. Employers who previously would hire anyone who was recommended by an employee now require that each applicant complete his or her own application in English.

Fort Smith presents a range of examples of the relationship of English proficiency to employment. Here, too, jobs have been available

for people with little or no English. The following exemplifies the problem of being employed but having poor English skills. A man who holds an assembly line job in Fort Smith said he had studied ESL in California for a year. He would like to have job training, but his English is not good enough to handle a formal course. Both he and his wife would like to study English again, he said, because they know that their poor command of the language is holding them back from both jobs and training. They would like to make job applications without help.

Unlike other communities studied, however, having good English skills in Fort Smith has not necessarily ensured having a good job in this community--or even having a job at all. Individuals who have not found work in Fort Smith include some with the best command of English and the best previous work experience. Nevertheless, English is still considered important. Lack of sufficient English skills has been given as the reason for rejecting Hmong job applicants even when they have held similar jobs previously. And lack of fluent English keeps individuals from participating in job training offered by a local community college because of the college's "all-or-nothing" language policy which limits job training participants to native speakers of English.

Portland lost three-quarters of its Hmong to the lure of California. Family reunification, the possibility of farming and continued public assistance which would provide the opportunity for continued study of English were among the most compelling reasons for leaving Portland. Those who remained were generally intent on getting or keeping jobs so that they could become self-sufficient and would be less dependent on the seemingly unpredictable changes in policy governing public assistance. Many in Portland are currently employed. However, they still feel the

need for more English classes to guarantee job security and/or enhance their chances for advancement. One man who has a good job (\$850/month take-home) expressed his ideas about the future:

I would like to get more education in English, but it's very hard to both work and go to school. I have to take care of my five kids so my wife can go to school. Classes are available at my job but I can't take them. I would really like to be an auto mechanic and the best way for me to learn would be both classes in English related to the job and doing the job, too.

The Availability of English Training

Availability of English language training for the Hmong has varied from locale to locale. ESL classes are provided by several different agencies: adult education centers affiliated with community colleges or public school systems, churches or other private non-profit institutions, and, in some instances, Hmong mutual assistance associations. Funding is supplied primarily by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, but also by the federal and local resources which provide for adult education, local community college and local school district programs in general, as well as local volunteer programs. In some areas, particularly rural locations, no instruction is available. However, in most places where the Hmong population is large, previously existing and newly created programs have generally responded by offering classes in English for students with limited literacy skills. Though at first such attention was not coming, 40.1% of ORR-funded programs in 1982 reported placing "heavy emphasis" on literacy training (Reder, Nelson & Arter, 1982). At that time, 10.5% of refugee students in English language training nationwide were Hmong.

Initially, Hmong students' limited previous educational experience and literacy presented a challenge to existing ESL programs whose traditional instructional approaches usually assumed a certain amount of previous education and literacy. In the first years of Hmong resettlement, teacher training and materials appropriate to Hmong students were virtually nonexistent; since then several beginning texts for ESL students with limited literacy have been developed.

Among the communities studied here, the extent, focus and quality of ESL training provided has varied considerably. As noted above, some areas became known for the high quality of English training developed specially for the Hmong and other groups of similar backgrounds. The Twin Cities area, in particular, gained national recognition for the ESL and vocational training programs developed in St. Paul. The adult ESL programs there recognized very early the necessity of providing instruction that was adapted to the level of the students and that focused the content of instruction on the immediate communicative needs of the refugees. Also, since 1980, under mandate from the State refugee office, all programs have focused on language needed for job hunting and employment rather than on general survival skills. The existence of high caliber, appropriate ESL and vocational programs is often cited by resettlement workers as one of the factors which influenced large numbers of Hmong to settle in the Twin Cities.

In other communities, dedicated teachers labored to develop appropriate materials to meet the needs of these new students. Because Hmong communities have sprung up with little advanced notice and often have moved with equally little warning, the process of curriculum development has been slow and duplicative as well. Teachers and

administrators have worked hard to identify and then address the specialized needs of this population, only to have the target population move and the funding decrease. Portland provides a case in point. In response to heavy Hmong immigration to the area, a specialized ESL program for refugee women was developed in Portland. The program provided cultural orientation sensitive to the backgrounds and needs of Southeast Asian hilltribe women. The sensitivity of the program, the curriculum based on the everyday communicative needs of the students, and the fact that the program provided child care made it popular with Hmong women and brought it wide recognition. Diminished funding and refugee numbers caused the demise of this promising project.

In the course of this Study, ESL programs in areas where the Hmong have moved, particularly the Central Valley of California, were found to be struggling with the new type of student, just as other programs in other areas had struggled before them. Communication with more experienced programs in areas with a longer history of Hmong resettlement has been slow to develop. ESL programs in Fresno are still reeling from the impact of the unprecedented migration of vast numbers of preliterate Hmong to their area. The programs, although trying to adapt, are overwhelmed. Classes are filled beyond capacity and waiting lists are long.

In the communities studied in which relatively high numbers of Hmong are employed--Providence, Dallas-Fort Worth, Fort Smith, and more recently Portland--ESL training is available, although emphasis on such training is low and classes are limited. In many communities, including the Twin Cities, Orange County and Providence, the state or county

refugee office has limited ORR-funded ESL to 6 months per student. As shall be seen below, this amount of instruction is considered far from adequate.

A few states have used money earmarked for refugee ESL to fund classes given by Hmong mutual assistance associations. Such classes were offered by Lao Family Community in Santa Ana until the funding was discontinued in 1982. Lao Family Community in the Twin Cities has provided specialized ESL since 1980 to prepare preliterate Hmong adults for subsequent entry into regular ESL classes elsewhere. The teachers are Hmong bilinguals. The curriculum includes not only introductory ESL, but also Hmong literacy, survival skills and basic mathematics. Students attend 20 hours per week for 3 months and cannot repeat the course. These classes have proved to be extremely popular with Hmong at beginning levels of instruction. In Providence the Hmong-Lao Unity Association has been conducting a night school ESL program for 2 years. The teachers are drawn from the ranks of Hmong college students and the classes are designed to serve three levels of English proficiency, from preliterate to advanced students preparing for vocational training or GED classes.

Program Utilization

As might be expected from the high priority given by the Hmong to the need for improved English skills, most Hmong adults have attended some formal ESL training in the United States. Surveys of the Hmong communities in the Twin Cities, Denver, Seattle and Stockton conducted in 1982 (Reder & Cohn, 1984) indicated that 74% of Hmong adults had received some English training. The mean number of hours attended for those with training was 692, or equivalent to 3 hours a day (the typical length of

refugee ESL classes) 5 days a week, for approximately 46 weeks. There was little difference in Hmong utilization of English language training compared to other refugee groups surveyed.

Findings from the Hmong Resettlement Study show that well over half of Hmong adults nationwide have received training. In some areas the rates range as high as 80-90%. However, fewer have been able to participate in other areas, particularly small towns where programs are inaccessible. The rates of participation in ESL training in the seven communities studied appear to follow a pattern tied to each locale's emphasis on English training, availability of training and the employment rate of the Hmong living there. Thus, in the Twin Cities, participation is very high in general, although lower for women. Similarly, in Fresno, although the availability of training has yet to catch up to the demand, most of the men and about half of the women attend. Fort Smith presents the opposite case: Half of the men have never attended ESL training in the U.S., and currently in Fort Smith almost no one is attending classes. In Dallas-Fort Worth very few Hmong participate.

How well the Hmong are doing in their attempts to learn English and reasons for their rates of acquisition and, in some communities, their lack of participation in existing programs will be discussed below.

Hmong Progress in Learning English

Despite numerous success stories of Hmong bilinguals in every major Hmong community in this country, learning English is still a serious problem for most Hmong. Other studies conducted with the Hmong corroborate the finding that language remains a substantial barrier to successful Hmong resettlement and self-sufficiency. In the survey

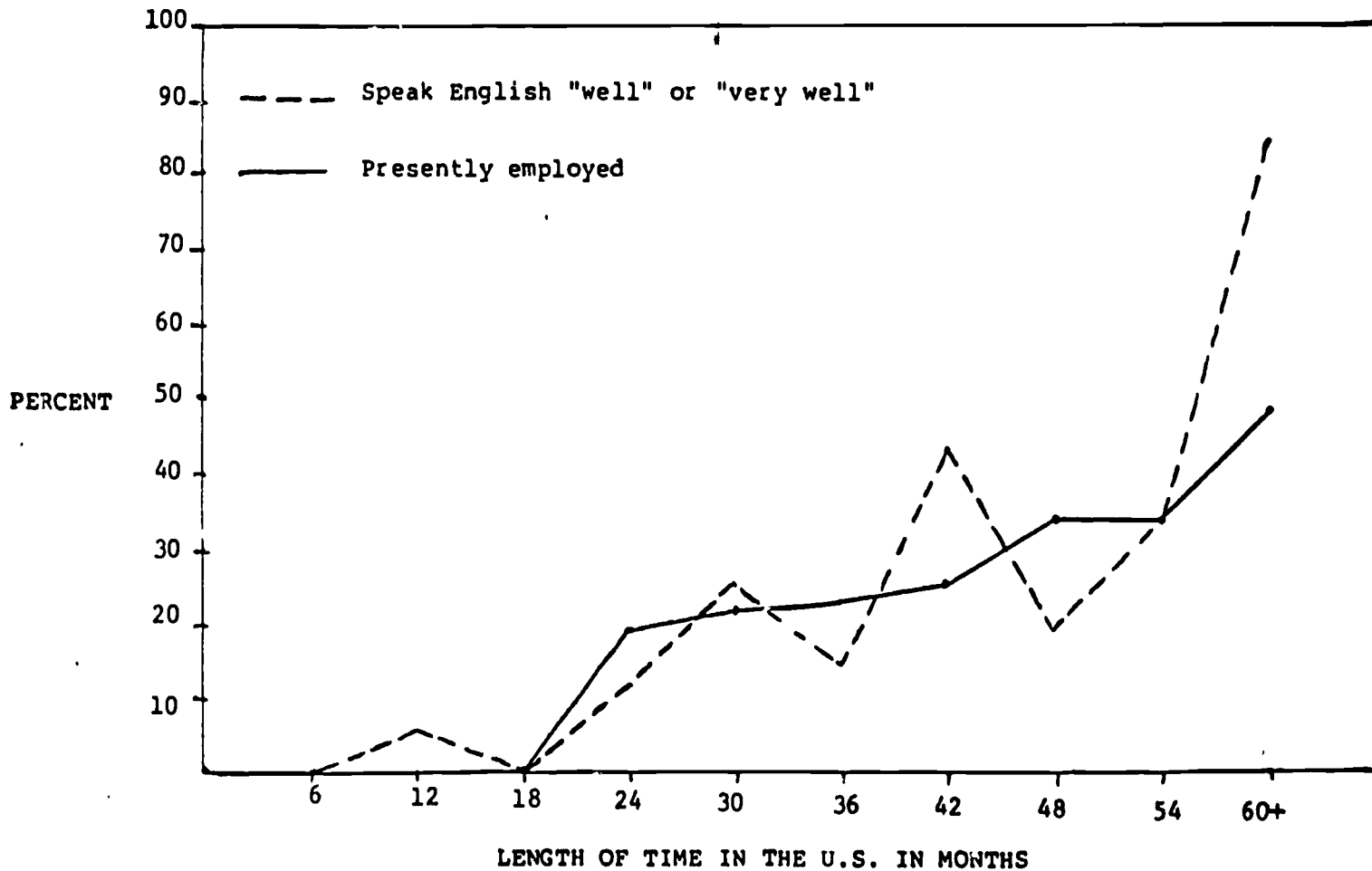
conducted in approximately 90% of Hmong households in Portland in the spring of 1981, 37% of the adults reported that they spoke English "not at all" and over 60% reported they spoke less than "a little" (Reder, 1982). Similar household surveys conducted in the Twin Cities, Denver, Seattle and Stockton in 1982 (cited above) showed that at the time of the surveys (1 to 3 years from date of entry to the United States), 55% of the Hmong had reached "survival" levels, only 37% reported they could "converse with friends" in English, 29% could converse with strangers, and just 11% said they could look for a job on their own without the help of an English speaker (Reder & Cohn, 1984).

The results from the household survey in the Twin Cities illustrate the close association between English proficiency and length of residence in the U.S. (see Figure II). Note that only after 5 or more years in the U.S. do more than 50% of the respondents claim to speak English "well" or "very well." Only among those who have been in the U.S. longer than 18 months do as many as 20% give such a high evaluation of their English proficiency. (This figure also shows the close correlations among English and employment and time in the U.S.)

Results from interviews and group meetings conducted in the Twin Cities for the Hmong Resettlement Study in the Fall of 1982 are representative of the general findings in the other communities studied. Despite the constant emphasis on "survival skills" and cultural orientation in instructional programs for Hmong adults, and the increasing emphasis on communicative skills and functional, particularly job-related English in many ESL classrooms, there is a widespread feeling that most Hmong adults are unable to cope by themselves in many situations. Staff researchers were told that most Hmong adults remain

FIGURE II

EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-REPORTED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY BY LENGTH OF TIME IN THE U.S.



bewildered by many aspects of American life. Hmong adults rely heavily on the communicative skills, cultural knowledge, and even the judgment of adolescents when dealing with Americans and American institutions. This has the far-reaching effect of undermining the role and authority of parents. In many matters adults are unable to make decisions or solve problems because they don't know what options they have.

In communities such as Dallas-Fort Worth, there are a number of Hmong with good English skills who may be considered examples of "successful" resettlement in the sense that they have good jobs which allow them to be economically self-sufficient and they have English skills adequate enough to enable them to be socially self-sufficient as well. But they are the exception rather than the rule. In all of the communities studied, there are large numbers of Hmong who--even though they may be employed--cannot cope in most situations requiring English. For some families, adults' inability to speak English is even causing problems in communication within the home. In Providence several Hmong bilingual heads of household reported a linguistic dilemma of growing proportions in their families. The children have not learned enough Hmong to follow the intricacies of their parents' conversation. At the same time, the children learn concepts and words in English that have no counterparts in the Hmong language. The result is a linguistic impasse. As a Hmong leader observed,

Nobody in my family can say what they really want to say and have anyone else understand them. What can we talk about? The food? Some gossip? I translate so my wife and my childrer can understand each other.

Factors Which Affect Hmong Acquisition of English

Many factors play a part in how well Hmong adults are learning English: Some are the result of the environment they have left behind; others develop in the new environment which they have entered; and still others less easily defined or measured may spring from personal, individual differences in language aptitude and motivation (which may of course have been influenced to some extent by past experiences or the present environment). The social dimensions of Hmong culture back in Laos, such as roles defined by one's sex and age, determined the formative experiences people had. For example, one's sex influenced whether or not an individual went to school and how much he or she participated in the wider Lao society in general. Such formative activities contributed to the acquisition of literacy in Lao (primarily through school) and proficiency in speaking Lao, as well as acquisition of literacy in Hmong. Individual characteristics such as age and gender and background characteristics such as previous literacy, bilingualism and education all appear to affect Hmong adults' acquisition of English.

The contexts people have in the U.S. for contacts with oral and written English--such as participation in formal English language training and ongoing experiences with native speakers on the job or in situations common to life here, such as shopping, going to church, or going to the doctor--also affect how people learn English. And these contexts depend on a number of other factors: the social organization of the resettled community, the prevailing social and economic conditions of the host society, and individual motivations and strategies for establishing and handling face-to-face contacts with English speakers and information written in English.

To understand why English acquisition continues to be a major concern for the Hmong and to identify strategies that may help them overcome their difficulties with English, the variety of factors that influence their English acquisition must be examined. Special emphasis will be given here to what the Hmong themselves consider to be problems for them in learning English.

Background characteristics. Recent studies of English language training and acquisition among the Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugees point to the importance of previous experiences and individual characteristics in predicting success in English acquisition (Green & Reder, in press; Reder, 1982; Reder & Cohn, 1984; Robson, 1982). Previous education is the most consistently significant positive experiential factor in these studies. Literacy in Hmong has also been shown to be a positive predictor of English acquisition. Individuals who are literate in Hmong tend to learn English more quickly than those who are not. Age is a negative predictor. Older students generally have less success learning English than do younger students.

These findings corroborate the perceptions of the Hmong and their teachers who were interviewed in the seven case studies reported here. People clearly believe that learning English takes longer for adults who are older and for those with limited previous education or literacy skills. The pattern observed nationwide is that only those Hmong presently under the age of about 25 who have had some education prior to their arrival here or who have been able to attend public schools in this country and the 2-3% of older Hmong with substantial previous education or knowledge of English at time of arrival seem to have a good command of English.

The experiences of two men in the Twin Cities may help to illustrate the influence of previous education on English acquisition. One man who had had no previous education and had struggled through 1 year of ESL described his problems with communications on the job:

On the job now I am not able to speak to the boss. I had to get help to fill out the application form, and some other people who already worked (where he works) helped me get the job. I still have trouble using English on the job. If I have an idea, something I want to say to the boss, I just don't say it because I don't know how. When the boss wants to tell me something, he usually shows me, rather than using words. In the place where I work there are 20 Hmong in two groups, but none of them knows English any better than I do.

By contrast, the other man knew some English when he came to the U.S. In Laos this man had finished all but the last year and a half of high school, including 2 years of English. He works as a machinist and has moved up in the last 5 years from a starting wage of \$7.00 to \$11.00 per hour. He got his job training entirely on his own. While working at his first job at a paper bag factory, he paid his own tuition and took a class in blueprint reading and machine shop. He worked 10 hours a day and went straight from work to class. Now he is buying his own house and has two cars.

Lack of literacy skills has prevented many Hmong adults, particularly older adults, from taking full advantage of available English classes, which often assume some literacy skills. Nonliterate say it takes them longer to learn English than it takes students who can read and write. They cannot take notes in class to review at home. They also realize they cannot use other strategies for learning English outside of class such as dictionaries and books which they see more educated or literate friends and family using to teach themselves. Neither can they benefit fully from daily exposure to written correspondence, newspapers and

street signs. An older Hmong man in Orange County described the community experience:

The Hmong are a jungle people and they never had any education. The majority are illiterate. We have been here 4 or 5 years already and it's hard to learn English as quickly as you need to use it. Six months or a year is not enough time.

The remarks of a woman in that community exemplify the comments heard throughout this Study with regard to age and English acquisition: "If we are still young, we can learn, but if we are 40 or 50, then we can't learn because we have many children and family problems." Many Hmong who feel discouraged about learning English consider themselves too old at 30 or 35.

Factors in ESL training which affect Hmong progress with English.

Factors which the Hmong identify as affecting their progress in learning English through ESL training include: intensity and duration of classes, class size, content, quality of teachers, use of bilingual aides, and logistical concerns such as scheduling of classes, distance and availability of transportation, and availability of child care. In the Twin Cities, one of the most common complaints heard from family heads in group meetings and from individuals in their homes concerned the duration and intensity of ESL courses. Almost none of the uneducated Hmong felt that they had received sufficient instruction in English to meet their needs. The only exceptions were some older people who have given up, who do not expect ever to be able to hold a job or venture into American society on their own. The 2 hours per day of instruction offered by one of the major ESL providers in the Twin Cities was considered far too little; 4-6 hours per day, at least at the beginning, was preferred. A Hmong college student gave this assessment of adult ESL:

The English program is not helping people to learn English. It should be 2 years of intensive classes. Maybe 5 hours a day. A lot of people get only an hour or two a day for a few months. People cannot possibly get jobs (at the end of their eligibility period) with this much English, when one considers that most people from Laos had no education.

No one who has worked with the Hmong in the Twin Cities believes that 6 months of ESL (the current State-mandated limit) is adequate to bring people to the degree of fluency and literacy needed for social and economic self-sufficiency. There are instructional programs at Lao Family Community and at the International Institute that require from 3 to 6 months just to bring students up to the point where most ESL programs begin. Similar opinions were expressed in Orange County. The 6-month limit on participation in refugee ESL training is seen as unrealistic for Hmong students: "They just get started," a Hmong welfare worker told us, "and then they get sent away."

The Orange County limitation was imposed in part to alleviate the burden of very large numbers of refugees entering ESL programs. Large class size and long waiting lists for entry into programs were complaints also heard in Fresno. As an elder in Fresno commented, "If the classes are too big, the students go for entertainment, but not for learning." The problems of overcrowded classes were enumerated by a student at a group meeting who passed a sheet of paper with the following points written in English:

1. It has a lot of students in one class so the teacher can't teach and help everybody in class.
2. Some lessons are copied from another book but these copies are not enough for the students and after the lesson is finished, the teacher takes them back so the students don't have them to learn or study at home.
3. Please increase the classes because there are a lot of students in a class.

The content of ESL instruction and method of presentation were topics of concern to the Hmong in nearly every community. The content was generally considered to be inappropriate. In Orange County and in Dallas-Fort Worth, for example, the Hmong feel that the ESL instruction available does not address the particular needs of the Hmong. It was designed with other ethnic groups in mind (for the Vietnamese in the early stages of Southeast Asian resettlement in Orange County, and for Hispanics in Texas). In every community in this Study people felt that the content of their English classes was irrelevant to one of their major concerns: getting a job and keeping it. In Orange County a man in his 50's explained:

English for a job and for daily living are different. For people my age, English is very boring, as is staying on welfare. Just learning "table, chair," etc., is boring and people are not motivated. We need to learn about applying for work, types of companies, and how to fill out an application.

A Hmong man in Fort Smith noted that the Hmong find ESL classes boring. He said the teachers keep going through "This is an apple, that is a banana," instead of teaching useful sentences, such as "I would like to have a job. I want to work with my hands." The comments of a woman in Fresno appear to echo this sentiment: "We would like the teacher to teach us what we are going to say at the hospital and how to get a job. We don't need to know about apples and oranges." In Portland, several Hmong criticized the lack of vocational emphasis in ESL provision. As one man in an intermediate class stated: "Even if we go to school, we don't learn anything about vocational training. I haven't learned yet how to fill out an application for work. If I learned that, I could go around by myself."

In some communities the poor qualifications and motivation of teachers and administrators and the lack of continuity of instructors were considered to adversely affect individuals' acquisition of English. In most communities the qualifications of ESL teachers vary from professionally trained ESL specialists to persons with very little knowledge of the English language, language pedagogy, or the problems and needs of illiterate students. Even trained ESL teachers have typically had little or no preparation for the task of teaching beginning English and literacy to adults as linguistically and culturally different as the typical Hmong student. In the Twin Cities, although the quality of ESL provided is generally considered to be quite good, observation of variations in teachers' qualifications gave rise to the serious charge from two separate groups of Hmong household heads that adult ESL programs deliberately hire poorly qualified American teachers so that refugee students will learn slowly and thus allow the programs to continue to receive funding. In Providence a 64-year-old Hmong man who has taken every available ESL class says the main problem with American teachers is their lack of preparation for the classroom. "They just grab any book or magazine or photocopy and try to make a lesson out of it." The old man said the Hmong way is different. "We need to have the confidence that our teacher really knows what he or she is doing." Another Hmong elder said, "The Americans change teachers too often. For us it means a different voice, a different teaching idea. The Hmong like to learn, but in an orderly, step-by-step way, with the same method each day."

Many Hmong indicated that bilingual instructors would be helpful at lower levels, combined with American instructors. With no bilingual instruction and seemingly unstructured teaching approaches, many students

feel lost. One group of household heads compared the confusing English classes with the magic and show of the Hmong shaman, "Chu Neng." They have a joke that English class is "Chu Neng's room," where they are only pretending to have class, with the noise and the bells. They don't know what's going on. They say, "Chu Neng's room has all the students!"

The comments of a man from Fort Smith exemplify the Hmong's concern for the applicability of the content and method of instruction to Hmong needs as well as the utility of bilingual instruction:

We know how to read a little, but when we read something we don't know the meanings of a lot of the words. When we were in the ABE ESL program in Fort Smith, our teacher was Vietnamese. She used the American method: The teacher reads and then the students read. We can say it but we don't know the meaning. The teacher would explain what it meant, but she explained the whole page, not the individual words. She would explain words to the Vietnamese students in their language, if they asked, but the Hmong of course didn't understand. So in ESL we need more help in learning vocabulary. And we should have Hmong teachers.

Logistical factors such as inconvenient class schedules, distant locations, lack of transportation, and lack of child care also influence Hmong acquisition of English through participation in formal ESL training. For women, in particular, lack of child care greatly inhibits their attendance in ESL classes--across all communities it was the reason most often mentioned for women's lack of participation in classes. A woman in Fresno lamented: "I want to study English so much. If only someone would help me babysit! If somebody took care of my kids, I would study all day long."

Learning English on the job. As noted, resettlement strategies have differed with respect to the emphasis given English language training as compared to immediate employment. Controversy exists over the appropriate mix of formal English language training and employment that

will lead to the most successful acquisition of the language. Results from assessments and interviews with Southeast Asian refugees in four cities (Arter, Hadley & Reder, 1984) indicate that for recent arrivals (6-12 months) English language training has a positive effect on English acquisition, but employment does not.

In many of the communities studied here the assumption has been made by service providers and many Hmong themselves that the best way for the Hmong to learn English is on the job. Hmong experiences learning English on the job have differed widely. Some find that it is a good place to learn, especially if they are the only Hmong working there and their job necessitates speaking English. A Hmong assembly worker in Orange County relates:

An agency introduced me to my employer and told him that I had an English problem. I know that education is important in this country, but I don't plan to go on to study because my family faces difficult financial problems, and I can't learn and solve those problems at the same time. Assembly work is a good chance to learn to speak English, because I have to talk to other people, so I can improve my English in assembly work faster than those who learn from class. Learning to speak about what I do is easier than learning to remember in class.

Another man in Fort Smith notes that for him the ideal way to learn would be by working in a factory where there are no Hmong or Lao and one has to speak English.

For most Hmong, however, the reality of the job situation is much different. The majority of the Hmong who are employed have jobs which require little use of English. In all of the communities studied which have a relatively large percentage of Hmong employed--Providence, Fort Smith, Dallas-Fort Worth, Orange County and Portland, most Hmong have entry-level jobs which would not have been available to them if the ability to speak English had been required, or they work with a fellow

Hmong employee who can't translate for them. On the assembly line in Providence or in the poultry plant in Fort Smith there is little opportunity to learn English. Despite the insistence of a voluntary agency director in Dallas that ESL is not necessary because the Hmong can pick up English at work, both men and women interviewed there indicated they could not learn English on the job. A man about 42 years old who had no education in Laos said that there was no opportunity for him to learn English on the job because he just sits and does his work on the assembly line. Many of the other employees are also non-English speakers, including three Hmong who don't know any more English than he does. A woman who lives in a nearby town where there are no ESL classes indicated that most of the women work in jobs in which there is no need to speak English, and therefore their English does not improve. Several individuals interviewed in Portland feel trapped in present entry-level or low-skill occupations because there is no way that they can improve their English and a better command of English is necessary for advancement.

Based on these case studies, then, it is a fallacy to assume that the Hmong will improve their English on the job sufficiently to have the language skills required to advance to supervisory positions or to look for other jobs. Recent reports from these communities indicate that employers who earlier hired Hmong and have valued them as skillful and reliable workers are in some cases now reluctantly letting them go because they have grown tired of the frustrations of miscommunication and the fact that, without a knowledge of English, their workers do not learn.

Learning English through American friends and other social contexts.

English is not only learned in the classroom or on the job. Contacts with native speakers either socially or in daily routine activities also provide opportunities for acquiring or improving one's English. For the Hmong in this and in other studies, lack of contact with native English speakers has been identified consistently as a problem in learning English. Interviews with over 200 refugee students nationwide (Reder & Cohn, 1984) indicate that one-third of refugee students never speak English outside of the classroom; and the percentage of those who cannot or choose not to speak English outside of class increases as the literacy and educational levels of students decrease.

In immigrant communities in the U.S. the following pattern has been well documented: The first generation uses its native language for most functions, the second generation uses it in fewer domains (Fishman, 1966). English is first adopted in "official," formal capacities, last adopted for use in family and private matters. The Hmong appear to be following this pattern, though to what extent Hmong communities will become stable bilingual communities remains to be seen. A head of household in Providence explained: "Inside our homes, it is like Laos. The food we eat, the words we speak, our customs are more like Laos than America. It is only America when we go out."

Contact with English speakers seems to be particularly restricted in communities such as Fresno and the Twin Cities, where the Hmong live in very large clusters. In Fresno, some 10,000 Hmong are concentrated in a few neighborhoods. There are eight Hmong grocery stores nearby. There is little opportunity for the Hmong to practice English. The coordinator of an adult school program there feels that one of the biggest dilemmas

the programs in the area face is how to get students to speak English outside of class. In addition to the density of settlement which discourages outside contacts in English, the Hmong in Fresno live in low income neighborhoods, and many of their neighbors are Spanish speakers.

Many Hmong in Fresno have even less contact with native English speakers than they had in other cities. As a result of secondary migration, friendships with English speakers (often original sponsors) had to be broken and most Hmong have not found replacements for those friends. Interviews with Hmong individuals who migrated from Portland* indicate that the Hmong in Fresno have fewer American friends than they had in Portland and much less contact with any non-Hmong neighbors. Some women, who had previously attended school in Portland, relate that in Fresno they don't go to school or use English and they are forgetting what they had learned.

Most Hmong are acutely aware of the effects of isolation on their ability to learn English and thus expand their contacts and learn more English. For some this awareness has kept them from living in areas of high Hmong concentration. Some Hmong families remained in Portland, rather than moving to California, in part so that they and their children would have more opportunity to speak English. In Orange County, one Hmong woman with no previous education or literacy who has been particularly successful in learning English attributes her success to

*Functional Literacy Project, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

working with English-speaking people and living apart from the large clusters of Hmong in Orange County. As she said, "Living here in Orange [city], nobody speaks Hmong, and I learn English. If I lived down there (in Santa Ana) with all the Hmong people, I would only speak Hmong and not learn English." Another individual who had never been to any ESL program described an alternative learning strategy:

Due to family problems, I never went to school. I learn to speak English in the church. I improve faster than those who learn in school, because the people at the church are very friendly. They know I can't speak English, so everyone wants to help. The best way to learn English is to be with friends, with American people and to talk English at home with the children and learn from the children.

Even relatively small Hmong communities can suffer from social isolation. A Hmong man in Fort Smith asked: "How do you make friends? How do you get American friends to visit? And how can you have friends if you don't speak well and your house is dirty and you don't have any money to make it nice?" The Hmong in Fort Smith apparently have little opportunity to practice speaking English with American friends. Even members of the Hmong church there which shares space with an American congregation do not have American friends or acquaintances. Members of the two congregations do not even exchange greetings in the parking lot.

Within communities, the amount and nature of contacts with Americans varies from family to family and individual to individual. Some families who chose to remain in Portland boast as many as 11 American friends with whom they have frequent contact; others have none. Differences in their willingness to speak English are apparent.

Other factors that affect English acquisition. In addition to background characteristics, past experiences and ongoing activities that

may influence how one learns English, there are very personal, individualized factors such as language learning aptitude, motivation and attitude. Aptitude is difficult to define. It has not been measured in this Study. Suffice it to say here that aptitude is not considered a major contributor to Hmong difficulties learning English. The wisdom of an elder in Providence speaks to this issue. He said that eventually the Hmong will "catch the American sound," if they can only stay in school. He made the following analogy: In 1933, only six Hmong could read and write Lao. By 1965, most of the Hmong men could read, write and speak Lao. In 30 years, about half of the Hmong population in Laos learned a new language without the benefit of schools, teachers, or formal instruction. If the Hmong accomplished this on their own in 30 years, the elder argued, even the older Hmong should be able to learn English with the help of the American teachers in half that time.

Physical and psychological factors seem to weigh heavily on Hmong adults' acquisition of English. Again and again, Hmong in Fresno cited physical and emotional problems stemming from war as obstacles to learning English. Many ex-soldiers have hearing or sight problems or head injuries which they feel make it difficult for them to concentrate. Some are too depressed or worried to learn. One man remarked, "The teachers are all right, but I still can't learn, because I have family problems and because of home sickness." Another said, "We keep trying to speak English, but we can't forget about the war." In Portland, some noted that stresses from war injuries, relocation trauma, and the burden of providing for a family when job security is uncertain made learning difficult. One man said, "I learn, then forget immediately. I think

this is because I am depressed; I worry about taking care of my family; I worry every day if food can be provided and the rent paid."

Individuals who are employed usually say they would like more English training. Many, however, are too tired from physically difficult, tedious jobs to attend classes regularly. Family responsibilities also tie them down after work. Parents often take turns caring for the children: The father may work during the day and babysit at night so his wife can attend school. In most Hmong families in the Dallas-Fort Worth community, both husband and wife are working, one at night and one during the day. While both men and women want to take ESL classes, women in particular feel it is even more difficult for them than for men because of their additional child care and home responsibilities.

Some Hmong have become so discouraged from their experiences adapting to life here and trying to learn English that they have virtually given up. These are often older people, but also include younger individuals whose family responsibilities and prospects for the future weigh heavily on them. A young family head in Fort Smith had studied ESL and "living skills" 2 hours a day during his first year in California, before he got a job. Since that time he has had no ESL, and he feels that his English is very poor. Because of his weak educational background, he finds that he learns English very slowly. But, if there were a convenient ESL class he would go. He has always dreamed of being a carpenter. To study carpentry he would have to improve his English first. For this reason, he is inclined to give up on that dream and find a way to live and work with other Hmong as much as possible so he will not need to use English.

There are also a sizeable number of Hmong adults who make some initial progress in learning English and developing literacy and then reach a low plateau from which they seem unable to progress. They may take ESL course after course without making any noticeable gain. These individuals are not only older people; they may also be people in their 20's and 30's. A variety of explanations are offered for the existence of these nonlearners--poor teachers, inappropriate teaching methods, learning disabilities and emotional problems that interfere, lack of motivation. Yet these slow students are usually remarkably regular in attendance; some have taken several courses. It is possible, of course, that they are enthusiastic about attending classes, meeting friends, doing what is expected of them, but not motivated to learn English because of a pessimistic or uncertain view of the future or lack of confidence in their ability to comprehend, to learn, to cope.

Recommendations for Improvement

As the numerous quotations and examples cited in this discussion of English acquisition attest, throughout the months of fieldwork on these case studies Hmong people as well as professionals working with them expressed many opinions about their experiences and ways to make learning English easier for the Hmong. Although the amount and quality of ESL training available and the degree of Hmong satisfaction with it differed from community to community, the suggestions for improvement were quite consistent across the seven case studies.

More English language training. The 6-month limitation currently in effect in several states is considered especially unrealistic. Evidence from these case studies and other research as well indicates that the

Hmong are learning English, but progress is slow. Particularly for preliterate, uneducated individuals and older people, English acquisition proceeds at a discouraging pace. One man's experience is typical:

The ESL instruction was good as far as I'm concerned, but learning English is very hard for me because I never studied before, and I had to learn the ABC's and that was hard. The teacher would read first, and then we would follow. Also there was homework; we were supposed to fill in the missing words in the story, but I couldn't do it. The amount of time was not enough--2 hours a day is not enough for people like me. Altogether I had ESL classes for 1 year.

Individuals who are currently employed and supporting themselves express great concern about their inadequate English skills and the need for more ESL training.

Practical, job-oriented ESL. Over and over again, people stressed the need for ESL training that would prepare them for employment. They asked for a focus on job language: practice in filling out job applications, what to say in an interview, vocabulary and behavior appropriate for specific types of work. A suggestion frequently heard was that ESL and job training should be combined from the start and if at all possible ESL training should take place at the job site. Even in the Twin Cities, where the State mandated that ESL have an employment focus, it appears that some ESL programs were slow to incorporate job-related English. A Hmong working in job placement said the following about adult ESL for the Hmong:

You must remember that people 40 to 60 years old had no education in Laos. These people don't learn enough in 1 year to be able to hold a job or even to drive a car. How can ESL be improved? For one thing, teach driving first. Then teach English related to the job, appropriate to the working environment--simulate the job situation. For the new arrivals, there would be 6 months of basic English, followed by a period of job training accompanied by English.

The Twin Cities area offers a model for combining job training and language training--the Hiawatha Valley Project (Church World Service)

training in intensive farming combined with relevant ESL instruction. Leaders of Lao Family Community in the Twin Cities also have the idea of training Hmong men in furniture making and carpentry through on-the-job training with an ESL component.

Training designed to meet Hmong needs. Several suggestions relate to the need for training designed specifically for the Hmong. In Orange County and in Texas, in particular, but in other communities as well, the Hmong have been placed in ESL classes that were designed based on the needs and backgrounds of other non-English-speaking groups (such as Vietnamese or Hispanic). Often the teachers are even members of those other groups. The assumption that the common goal of wanting to learn English is enough to make the classroom experience appropriate ignores some of the characteristics that distinguish the Hmong from other ESL students and that make learning English more difficult for them, namely, their lack of knowledge of literacy even in their own language, lack of education, lack of orientation to an urban, highly technological environment, etc.

Many Hmong suggested the importance of making greater use of bilingual aides and instructors, especially for the beginning levels of instruction. In Providence and in the Twin Cities, and previously in Orange County, pre-ESL classes provided by the Hmong mutual assistance associations and taught by bilingual Hmong have enjoyed great popularity. An increase in the availability of such classes around the country could improve the efficiency of regular beginning level ESL classes by preparing students for entry into those classes. Increased use of bilingual aides could also address the problem of Hmong parents' reliance on their children for information on which to make parental

decisions. More indepth orientation to educational, economic and social issues facing the parents could be provided in Hmong.

Given the rather unique background characteristics of the Hmong, a common request was for a concrete, structured, step-by-step approach to teaching English. One man noted, "We never study the 'beginning' of the book. The teacher needs to go step-by-step. We are adults, but we need to start like in the first grade." In a group meeting in Fort Smith a man said, "The teachers need to go word by word over the lessons and have each student say the words. When the teacher reads the lesson, that's no good. We don't catch the words." A woman thought the most important thing for the teacher was to go slowly, to spend enough time on one sentence so that students were sure of it before going on. But she also said that sometimes teachers go too slowly and teach the same thing over and over when students have already learned it. Related to this last comment, adults felt that more individual attention, regular periodic assessments and feedback on their progress would be helpful. Reduced class size--which would facilitate accomplishing these suggestions--was also a frequent request.

Structural improvements. Other suggestions frequently voiced were the need for child care (this would greatly increase the number of women able to attend ESL classes), convenient scheduling of classes (taking Hmong working schedules and availability of public transportation into account), improved transportation and/or more accessible classes (women often expressed the desire to have classes near or in their homes).

More opportunities to practice English outside of class. As noted above, lack of contacts with native English speakers is a continuing

concern for most Hmong. Creative programs must be developed which will help foster social contacts with Americans from which friendships can grow. One such program might include the incorporation of volunteer tutors into the classroom and the addition of social activities and field trips in which students and volunteers participate on a regular basis. Follow-up in the Hmong students' homes by these same volunteers and invitations for the students to visit volunteers' homes as a regular part of the program would also increase students' opportunities for social interaction with native English speakers.

Lack of real-world practice with newly acquired English skills inhibits the progress of many Hmong adults and helps to maintain their linguistic isolation, which in turn contributes to the general isolation many refugees feel, particularly the elderly. As one man sadly remarked: "I feel like a blind man learning to see. Most people (English speakers) see the whole world. I only see parts of it."

Education of Hmong Children

The education of Hmong children will be a crucial determinant of the long-range results of Hmong resettlement in this country. An underlying expectation in Hmong culture has long been that as children become adults they will assume the responsibility of caring for their parents and elder relatives. This responsibility has become an even more serious undertaking here in this new environment where most Hmong adults have found themselves ill-prepared to be self-sufficient. As evidenced by interviews with individuals, families, group leaders, men and women alike, the Hmong have a very clear awareness of the importance of their children's education for the future well-being of all Hmong in this country. Hmong at nearly all levels--elders, parents, young bilinguals, including many high school and college students--place a high value on education. As one elder admonished, while discussing the need for help for children without financial support to complete school, "Don't forget the younger generation. They are our future."

Hmong children in the United States have a range of special linguistic, educational and cultural adaptation needs to be met. The majority come from homes in which there is little or no knowledge of English and in which none of the adults has ever been to school or knows how to read or write in Hmong. Before arrival in this country, most of the children themselves were as likely as their parents to have lacked the opportunity to get any formal education, whether because of limited access to schooling in Laos, time spent in flight or time spent in refugee camps where formal schooling was also limited or unavailable. For example, of the 400 Southeast Asian students, mostly Hmong, who

enrolled for the first time in the St. Paul school system (all levels) during the school year 1979-80, the majority had never attended schools of any kind and almost none of the children under 16 had studied English before coming to the United States.

A related concern regarding the education of Hmong children here is the linguistic and cultural isolation most Hmong children continue to experience in this country--especially those who are born here. Since Hmong remains the language of preference in most homes and since the majority of Hmong live in neighborhoods and apartment complexes of high Hmong concentration, children born here have little opportunity to hear and speak much English before they enter the school system. Other studies of the Hmong in the United States (Reder, 1982; Reder & Cohn, 1984) estimate that 25% of the population at present is under the age of 5 and the high birthrate (50/1,000) shows no signs of decreasing. Thus, Hmong preschoolers will probably continue to be monolingual for some time to come. The likelihood of a continuing need for ESL and bilingual education at the early levels of schooling must be recognized by school systems as they address the needs of their Hmong students. The situation in Fresno presents the clearest example of the potential impact on the school system of this unseen monolingual population: Of the 10,000 Hmong in Fresno, approximately 2,500 are now aged 0-5 years. These children will be entering kindergartens in the school system at the rate of about 500 per year--enough to fill 20 new classes each year.

The Response of the Schools

The type, quantity and quality of education Hmong children receive is closely interwoven with a number of other issues in resettlement, particularly language and cultural barriers, welfare dependence, and secondary migration. It is, of course, also affected by the community in which they live, the community's history with immigrants, and the particular school the children attend. The response of the schools in the communities studied here has varied considerably. In some communities with relatively small numbers of Hmong students and little previous experience with refugees or other non-English-speaking immigrants, the schools were slow to recognize the existence of this different group of students. Others with a long history of immigrant populations have responded by considering the Hmong students just one more group to fit into an existing ESL system. And still others which received overwhelming numbers of Hmong responded quickly with programs developed to meet specifically Hmong needs.

English as a Second Language provision. Most schools with Hmong students offer ESL classes from one to several hours a day for students with English difficulties. In Fort Smith, with the smallest Hmong student population (88) among the communities in this Study, ESL has been provided to small groups of students one to two periods a day by itinerant teachers. Until 1982 the program was basically for Vietnamese students, but the Hmong are now recognized as a separate group and plans for the 1983-84 school year included a special bilingual education program (see below).

The communities of Dallas-Fort Worth and Providence have experienced a heavy influx of non-English-speaking immigrants for years. Although both communities have long been providing ESL to limited English proficiency (LEP) students, they differ in the amount and organization of the instruction offered. In Dallas-Fort Worth, the approximately 100 Hmong students are mainstreamed--almost totally immersed in normal classes for English speakers. ESL classes are available at all schools for LEP students, but instruction is not adapted to fit the Hmong. (Most LEP students are Hispanic.) In high school, 1 hour a day is available; no bilingual aides are used. In elementary schools there are some Lao bilingual aides. In Providence (675 Hmong students), 3 to 4 hours of English instruction per day are provided with the assistance of bilingual aides (18 of 30 are Hmong). LEP students are not mainstreamed. In elementary schools, all Southeast Asian LEP students are grouped together; at upper levels all LEP students are taught together. (This practice is a concern to Hmong parents in Providence; they worry that their children won't learn as well as they might if they were placed in class with native English speakers.)

The Twin Cities (2,500-3,000 Hmong students) and Fresno (3,500 students) present rather contrasting cases of school districts which have staggered from the unexpected influx of unusually large numbers of Hmong students. Schools in St. Paul and Minneapolis are now at a much different stage in their response to the growth of their Hmong student bodies than are the Fresno schools. The Twin Cities case provides numerous examples of interesting and thoughtful approaches to Hmong

education. Fresno, on the other hand, appears to be still reeling from the impact of the massive waves of Hmong migration which began in 1981 and gained increasing momentum in 1982 and 1983.

Since the Twin Cities schools have been dealing with a large Hmong population for about 2 to 3 years longer than have the Fresno schools, one might expect their programs to be more developed. However, the number of years of experience providing Hmong education does not appear to be the sole reason for the extreme differences between the two communities in provision of educational services. Educators in the Twin Cities responded very quickly to the task of identifying and addressing the needs of their new clients. In Fresno the response has been slower. To a large extent, such differences in response are likely due to differences in these communities' histories with ethnic minorities. In the Twin Cities area, Asian and Pacific Islanders (most of whom are Southeast Asian, primarily Hmong) are the second largest ethnic minority (after Blacks)--and the largest non-English-speaking group. Thus the need for large-scale ESL and bilingual programs is a relatively new phenomenon for the Twin Cities schools. The Fresno area has a multi-ethnic heritage. The County is home to a rich array of immigrant groups and speakers of languages other than English. According to the 1980 Census, 10.6% of the County's residents are foreign born and approximately 25% speak a language other than English at home. Nearly 30% of the area's population is Hispanic. The schools have been providing bilingual education and ESL to large numbers of Spanish-speaking students for years. With such programs already in place, it appears that members of the educational community (and other

social service providers as well) have been slow to recognize the distinctive needs of the growing numbers of Hmong students, or perhaps they have been uncertain of the stability and longevity of the Hmong community in their area. (The impact of secondary migration on the provision of educational services will be discussed below.)

The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, more than any other community case in this Study, have experimented with and developed several different approaches to teaching the Hmong. Both have had specific (though not truly bilingual) instruction programs for Hmong students under federal and state bilingual education grants. Their programs have used ESL teachers, bilingual teachers (mostly Southeast Asian) and bilingual aides. Both districts have hired at least a few Hmong as teachers and teacher's aides. Minneapolis experimented with teaching Hmong literacy and developing and using Hmong language materials. St. Paul experimented with intensive ESL training at special centers prior to assigning students to regular schools. Both have concentrated same-language students in selected schools so that language and specific instruction could be provided. Both provide ESL classes, the amount dependent on each student's ability to succeed in mainstream classes.

Bilingual education. This Study found no examples of self-contained bilingual classrooms in any of the seven communities. The closest approximation to bilingual education is provided in the Twin Cities area, especially in Minneapolis schools. Hmong staff have been used to teach special sections of some subjects in Hmong, particularly social studies.

However, these teachers are not fully accredited. In general, the role of Hmong bilingual staff has been to tutor Hmong students in subjects studied in mainstream classes.

As noted above, for the 1983-84 school year, the Fort Smith school district received a bilingual education grant. The staff was to include two Hmong bilingual "assistant instructors" (plus two Vietnamese and two Lao) and a Hmong caseworker. The program was planned to provide native-language assistance as well as ESL for Hmong and other LEP students, whose numbers were projected to increase by 25% each year for the next few years.

Other special programs. In the Twin Cities schools, special efforts have been made to provide orientation about Hmong culture and background to teachers, other school staff, and American classmates. Auditorium programs and school-wide Hmong New Year programs, for example, have been used to inform American students about the Hmong and to heighten Hmong students' sense of self-worth and acceptance. To help refugee students and increase contact between refugee and American students, peer-tutoring has been tried in St. Paul. The concept seems to work but the program has had a limited impact because of lack of development funds and volunteer tutors.

Another example of an innovative program to address the special needs of Hmong students is found at Boulder High School (in Colorado). There Hmong students participate in a program in which they put out a newspaper in English which includes Hmong folklore and stories and helps them practice English at the same time as it provides American students with some understanding of Hmong culture.

In Portland schools, the primary orientation in ESL classes as well as mainstream classes has been academic, with the goal of preparing students for college. However, the school system has gradually become aware of the special needs of Hmong students, including the need for realistic vocational education and training. Vocational language training classes and a power sewing training class have been established. Hmong students participate in both classes. Of 38 students in the power sewing class, ten are Hmong. Five of the ten have found jobs, at least two of which are result of this project.

The impact of secondary migration on school programs. The impact of secondary migration on Fresno schools seems clear. The number of LEP non-Spanish-speaking students (mostly Hmong) quadrupled from March 1981 to March 1983, increasing from 499 to 2,080, with no slow-down in sight. No one predicted this massive increase in the number of students needing specialized ESL training. Teachers, class space and materials have all been taxed to the limit, and the school system is still trying to determine the type of response most appropriate for this unprecedented situation.

In the meantime, school districts from which those students came, such as that of Portland, have experienced sharp reductions in their Hmong student populations. Portland had been slow to recognize its Hmong students and their particular backgrounds, but after several years, the schools had developed special teaching approaches and materials for them, only to see three-quarters of these students disappear. Recent reports from Fort Smith indicate that the new bilingual program there has suffered a similar fate with regard to its Hmong students. As noted earlier in this report, after the fieldwork for this Study was completed,

most of the Hmong community of Fort Smith left the area. Needless to say, such rapid and seemingly unpredictable movements of large numbers of Hmong families make planning, funding and providing educational services for Hmong children difficult at best.

Hmong Student Performance

How well are Hmong students doing in their pursuit of a formal education? Clearly the answer to this question varies with each individual student. However, conversations with teachers, administrators, parents, leaders and high school students in all of the communities studied indicate that with regard to educational progress and special needs there seem to be three distinct groups of Hmong students. The first is made up of the younger children in elementary, junior high, and the early years of high school who have been in this country for several years, whose English is still usually classified as "limited" (LEP) by school systems, but who are making good progress and learning rapidly. This group continues to have some language problems, which are evident in their lower-than-grade-level reading scores. Teachers generally describe these students as hard-working and eager to learn, though still having problems with English and cultural adjustments. These students do well in math (except for word problems) despite serious initial deficiencies, but have difficulty with social studies because there is so much reading. The remarks of a parent in the Twin Cities exemplify the progress children in this group are making. When asked how his children are doing in school, he said "... the children like school and are getting along well. There are no Hmong teachers at school, but that is no problem."

The great majority of these elementary students are learning English and using it. They speak fluently on the telephone and often use English at home when talking about school or doing homework. Nevertheless, some students feel the effects of the linguistic and social isolation in which most Hmong live. One student commented about the difficulties of learning English: "Sure we learn English in school. But when we come home nobody speaks English. Even the little kids--they don't speak English."

This last comment points to the existence of the second group of Hmong students... the young children entering school for the first time who have no skills whatsoever in English. The majority of new Hmong pupils fall into this group, particularly those who live in cluster housing and have had little contact with English-speaking children. Teachers and parents report that these children learn English quickly. As a widow remarked about her child's progress: "I don't know [whether he is getting a good education], but I think the school teaches him well, because he tells me how to say things in English. Also I know he is smart. He does very well in the first grade."

The third distinct group is the one with the greatest needs--adolescents from 14 to 20 years of age who because of war and resettlement had no previous education in Laos and who have been placed in school here according to their ages rather than their skill levels. These young people do not have the language skills or study skills to keep up with their American peers, particularly in areas requiring heavy reading, such as social studies. In Fresno, for example, the average reading level of Hmong students tested in the 11th grade was 4th to 5th

grade. These students struggle with academic and cultural pressures. Placement by age may have generally accepted social benefits, but academically it often serves to discourage students. In the Twin Cities, the comments were rather telling. One well-educated Hmong gave this assessment:

The programs for refugee in the public schools are pretty well organized. The children are making good progress, particularly those who grew up here who are in the elementary grades. One problem is that those who came into high school with no English were placed according to their age, which probably makes them feel good, but which results in their being graduated without having learned much.

A Hmong public school teacher stated this view more strongly:

It is a mistake to place students by age rather than by level. In Laos a teenaged student who hadn't been to school before would be expected to start at the beginning.

Another said:

I am very concerned about the youth. One problem is that young people are placed in school by age rather than by level of education. Youth 16 to 20 need a special program like the adult programs to orient them toward technical training.

In general, though Hmong students and their families value education highly and most Hmong students tend to be very conscientious about their school work, Hmong students are not doing as well as other LEP students, including other Southeast Asians. An ESL teacher in Fort Smith attributes this to their lack of previous education. In addition to having to catch up academically for many years without schooling, Hmong teenagers have to cope with conflicting cultural expectations and financial responsibilities as well. Traditions of early marriage and pregnancy compete in many teenagers' minds with the need to get a good education as a means to future success in this society. Even before marriage and parenthood, most teenagers, especially girls, have heavy

responsibilities at home. A teacher in Providence who had taught the Hmong for over 6 years noted, "The cultural adjustments for the Hmong are much harder than for any group I've encountered in school." These difficulties in adjustment--which will be discussed in greater detail below--often have serious consequences for Hmong students' academic performance.

In most of the communities studied here, policies of the public school systems and government financial assistance programs also affect the amount of education Hmong students are able to complete. States differ, but all have age limits on participation in high school: Students must leave school if they have not graduated by a certain age (which varies between 19 and 21). Because of these policies, many Hmong students must leave high school before they are able to earn a diploma. Differences among states have caused some interesting patterns in migration. For example, when students and their families moved to California from Portland, many were dismayed to find that high school students could not continue in school there beyond their 19th birthday. Since Portland schools allow students to remain in school until they are 21, some Hmong students--both boys and girls--left their families in California and returned temporarily to Portland to finish their schooling. They were willing to do this, despite considerable financial and emotional deprivation, because of the importance they placed on obtaining a high school diploma.

Government financial assistance regulations also affect the amount of schooling many students receive. As soon as they reach the age of 18, young men and women are no longer eligible for AFDC. To continue to help

their families financially, many young people who may have had only 2 to 3 years total public education prior to age 18 may be forced to drop out of school--without having learned English well or completed a secondary education--to attempt to find a job, in competition with American young people who have, at the same age, had access to 12 years of full-time free public education.

Because of these circumstances, in most communities the number of Hmong students who graduate from high school is still small. With the exception of a few school districts, the dropout rate for girls ranges from 80-95%; for boys the rate is lower, but still well over 50% in many areas. In Orange County, 90% of the students whose financial assistance is cut off while they are still in high school do not graduate. The problems contributing to these high dropout rates will be considered under "Student Concerns" below.

Against these statistics, the Dallas-Fort Worth community stands out as an anomaly. Half of the teenagers who gathered at a youth meeting were married, but they had not dropped out of school. Rather, young people seem to be putting out a tremendous effort to continue their education. Nearly all students are graduating from high school on schedule. It even appears that the young people are actively competing with each other for achievements in education. Although Hmong children and adolescents in Dallas have suffered from some of the same problems as students in other communities, several factors seem to be having a positive effect on their progress. The Dallas-Fort Worth community is small and dispersed, so that children play and talk with American children in their neighborhoods and at school. In school, too, children

are mainstreamed. The community is unusual in another way: Only Hmong who have succeeded in finding employment have stayed to settle there. Thus, Hmong families there have already tasted some success in supporting themselves (even though, as noted in the discussion of ESL for adults, there is currently some concern about the future of some of these jobs). Their orientation towards adjustment and resettlement in this country may be somewhat more positive and assertive than in some other communities where there has been less reason for optimism. A very strong, active Hmong student organization is another factor in the apparent success of most students in this community. (The activities of this association will be described in the section on suggestions for improving student performance.)

Student Concerns

Teachers across these communities agree that Hmong students have significant academic and cultural obstacles to overcome. Some of these have been mentioned in the discussion about students' progress in school. Some teachers feel that it is difficult to communicate with students about these problems. A teacher in Providence said, "They never come to you with a problem," and another remarked, "They're afraid to ask questions. Their attitude is: A teacher is a god We never know what's on their minds, what's bothering them." This section will take a closer look at student concerns that surfaced during conversations and interviews with high school and college students in the seven communities studied.

Conflicts in cultural expectations. Hmong students often experience considerable conflict as they straddle the bridge between their families' traditional beliefs and customs and the behavior they see around them in the new society. The conflict has different degrees of severity and different consequences for pre-adolescents than for teenagers. Most children now in elementary or middle school have few memories of life in Laos. Many left Laos at a very early age or were born in the refugee camps and are spending their formative years in public schools here. For them the divisor between home and school often seems quite stark. A teacher in Portland summed up the situation these children find themselves in:

There is a lot more conflict in Hmong growing up from pre-adolescent to adolescent ages . . . the kids coming out of middle school are less Hmong culturally, or kind of schizophrenic culturally and are therefore more confused about their identity. The kids just entering high school now who have been through the middle schools for the past several years show more evidence of family problems. Several kids are in foster care, which is highly unusual for Hmong. There are more behavior problems from this group, and though their English is substantially better than older, adolescent students, they seem to have accepted a level of pidginization--they've reached a plateau and don't want to change.

Although these children may be doing better academically than their teenage brothers and sisters, they have special problems that need attention. The patterns of behavior they are developing may become dilemmas for both the high schools and the general Hmong community as this first generation of relatively fluent English speakers, socialized to a significant degree in American schools, tries to bridge the gap between the traditions of the older generation and the newly adopted American cultural patterns of the young.

The contrast between school and home values can and often does have a direct impact on student performance and continued attendance at school. Students whose parents are uneducated and speak no English suffer the most in this regard. Their parents have little understanding of the educational demands placed on their children by the schools and they are unable to communicate with their children's teachers. Consequently, they often don't recognize the importance of giving their children encouragement to study and of setting aside time for homework. Hmong children, particularly girls, take on child care, cooking, gardening and other home maintenance responsibilities at a very young age. Caught between the expectations of their teachers and their parents, they have difficulty deciding how to act.

Hmong teenagers have another set of problems arising from the cross-cultural conflicts they feel. How they deal with these problems may well determine the paths their lives take in this country. Decisions on dating, marriage, continuing in school or dropping out to look for work, getting a college education, planning a career and family--all of these are momentous decisions that most teenagers and young adults grapple with. However, these issues are far more complicated for the Hmong than for their American counterparts precisely because of the cross-cultural situation in which they are growing up. Many of these issues are closely interrelated. The high dropout rate of Hmong students, for example, is a major concern of teachers, administrators, parents and students. The decision to drop out may depend on the decision to marry and have children. Either or both of those decisions

may be affected by academic difficulties, the age limit on high school participation, the cut off of AFDC funds when a student reaches 18, or the family's decision to move to another community.

Social contacts with American students. Although many Hmong high school and college students are concerned about preserving the strengths of Hmong culture and tradition, most students would also like to increase their social contacts with American students. In areas of high Hmong concentrations, this is especially difficult. For example, though students are reluctant to talk about it, in the Twin Cities and in Fresno harassment by American students is a common problem, both at elementary and secondary levels. The isolation experienced by Hmong students in many communities large and small effectively limits their opportunities to practice conversational English.

As with most teenagers, a major topic of discussion and concern for Hmong adolescents is boy-girl relations. Some students would like to participate more in American social activities. This is easier for boys than for girls, since the Hmong have very different standards of behavior for adolescent boys and girls. Girls' activities are controlled by their parents. If Hmong boys are involved in school sports and Hmong girls want to watch, the girls have to go with their parents. One girl said she was not allowed to go to dances, but when her father found out that her brother had sneaked out to a dance, he said nothing. Another girl explained:

We can't have dates like Americans. Every Friday night my American friends have dates. Sometimes an American guy asks me, 'You want to go out with me?' I say 'yes.' But when I come home my dad says 'No. You can't go. You're different.' He always says that. He says, 'You're different from the

Americans. You can't like an American.' . . . My parents want to keep the girls away from the [American] boys. If a girl goes out with a guy for even one night, she's going to get trouble from her parents.

Further complicating the cross-cultural dating situation for teenagers is the Hmong tradition of young marriage. Hmong parents' concern over what American parents might view as early and rather innocent dating among friends becomes much more justifiable in American eyes when one realizes that the traditionally appropriate age at which Hmong girls marry may be as young as 14 and certainly no older than 18.

Early marriage and pregnancy. The following conversation transcribed from a meeting of Hmong teenagers describes the pressures toward marrying young:

Girl: You know with our people if the girl is 18 years old they think you're too old already [to get married].

Boy 1: But that's the imagination of the parents. Here it's different.

Girl: But you know, especially all the boys, they always choose the younger ones.

Boy 1: I would marry someone 18, even older than me is OK, but you know, we have large families, and the parents cannot support the girls that well so whoever can support them or love them and treat them well they will go with them, they don't care about education, they just care about their present life. I think the school system makes them do it, too. They go to school and it's hard for them, the language is hard for them--they can't write, so it's easier to drop out of school.

Girl: I think most girls think like that--that the boys don't like old girls, so they get married.

Boy 2: I think that's changing, though. More people are going to see that if you have education you're going to have an easier time. I think the boys that have education realize that getting married young is not that good.

Although some youth see very slow changes taking place in traditional marriage patterns, the majority of Hmong students are following the traditional norm. There are a number of reasons Hmong girls are continuing to marry young. As noted above, they are given little freedom by their parents. They are not allowed to date like other students of their age, especially with non-Hmong, and the parents often decide whom they are to marry, on the basis of political considerations with little regard to the girls' preferences. They may have no choice but to marry. On the other hand, if they do have permission to marry someone they love, they may feel that they can't afford to pass up the chance, so they marry young. Some young women marry to escape their parents' control of their lives. But they are also clear about the differences in men's and women's roles in Hmong marriage. Even if the Hmong wife and mother works, she is responsible for all the cooking, cleaning and child care. One girl said:

. . . You have to obey your husband--everything he says. But still it's better than being a daughter. I think. But I don't know. I'm not married. If my husband tells me to take off his shoes, then that's what I have to do.

Asked about wives that work, a girl gave this reply:

Yes, now it's changing. Sometimes the husband stays home. But when the wife comes home, nobody helps her take off her shoes. She does that by herself.

Because postponing pregnancy has not been part of Hmong tradition and because most Hmong students have no information about birth control, all but a few Hmong girls who marry quickly become pregnant and drop out of school. Hmong boys marry at an older age than do girls, but many are also still in high school when they marry. They are less likely to drop

out, unless family and financial responsibilities force them to. Data from the St. Paul Public Schools indicate that as many as 80% of Hmong high school students in that city are married, and up to 90% of Hmong girls are dropping out of school prior to graduation. This pattern is not unusual. In Providence most of the Hmong boys marry but stay in high school. Ninety-five percent of the girls, on the other hand, never finish high school mainly due to pregnancy. In Orange County the pattern is the same: Marriage and pregnancy are the primary reasons girls drop out of school, many even before reaching high school. Birth control classes are not offered until senior year in many schools. Boys may drop out because they feel they should find work to support their growing family. However, they are not usually prepared to find a job. With large families and inadequate education or skills, these young families may be forming a new generation of welfare-dependent households. A Hmong college student described the cycle:

The girls still feel like if they are not married by 18 they won't get married at all. At first, when the kids get married, they are happy and think everything will be all right. Then they find out they can't get jobs and have children and need welfare again.

Although many of the Hmong teenagers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area are married, they express rather progressive views on the subject of marriage and education. Most believe that it is best to postpone marriage or at least child-bearing until one's education is complete. They seem to see the goals for young men and women as very much the same. But they also seem to be keenly aware of the traditional pressures for a Hmong girl to marry by the age of 18. The following opinions

expressed at a young people's meeting clearly reveal the general view of this group:

As far as I know a lot of Hmong [elsewhere] marry young . . . and don't ever get their diploma. They have family problems. After marriage for a year or so the girl is pregnant; then they have to work really hard and earn minimum wage because of no education.

In Dallas, Texas, we don't believe in getting married early. We believe in education more--we have to compete with other people . . . we believe in getting good jobs.

Academic difficulties. Hmong teenagers who arrived in this country with little or no previous education and no English skills continue to struggle to make up for those years without schooling. Most, understandably, have great difficulty meeting requirements to obtain a high school diploma. Faced with the policy to place students according to age and move them along through the system and out because of their age regardless of competency, some high schools have provided certificates of attendance or modified (meaningless) diplomas. Teachers in Portland note that recent Hmong high school graduates (and dropouts) still have a great need for language and vocational training that will enable them to get a job and support themselves. One Portland teacher believes that Hmong between the ages of 15 and 30 whether dropouts or recipients of "worthless" diplomas face extreme problems because they have a haphazardly constructed education that meets none of their immediate survival needs in terms of finding a job.

The current trend in several states to strengthen general graduation requirements has added to the pressure many Hmong students feel. School officials in Portland noted that of 23 Hmong graduating in 1983, only one would be able to successfully pass all of the "minimal competency" exams

which will be required for a 1984 high school diploma in Oregon. Worried about failure in these exams, some students simply leave school. Students who stay in school say they have serious problems with classes that involve reading texts such as social studies and American history and writing reports.

Welfare disincentives to high school completion. Youth and their parents see AFDC policies as a substantial disincentive for Hmong adolescents from poor families to complete high school. Older youth, behind in high school skills, are often not able to graduate by their 19th birthday. As discussed earlier in the Economic Adjustment section of this report, the AFDC grants of such students are cut, and their families can no longer support them. Under these conditions many young people feel they must quit school and go to work, only to find that they cannot find a job without a high school diploma.

A college student predicted problems for these youth and their young families:

In the next 5 to 10 years, I think the number of Hmong on welfare will increase. For example, I have four friends in the same generation as me. We went to the same high school and four of them dropped out. Now each of them has three or four children already. They get assistance from welfare. They cannot write a form, they cannot fill out an application, and they are in the same situation as old people.

The problems of the younger generation in obtaining schooling were eloquently summed up by a 19-year-old man from Fresno:

Ladies and gentlemen, I think the problems of the old people are an unsolved problem. I think that the key to solve their problems either short- or long-range is the younger generation like myself. Because the young people are those who had some education background so they are the advance people who can build the ability for self-sufficiency quicker. For example, old people who came in 1976 started to learn ESL; even today

they still cannot speak and go around themselves. But those young people who had the fortune to continue their education and go to college already got their college degree. Now a few of these young people are those who run back and forth to deal with the community problems.

As the Government system is today, the young people have no opportunity for anything at all. No one pays attention to this young generation, the welfare rates increase, because the young people had no opportunity so they got married too young and had children.

Today people like me do not qualify for any assistance--we cannot find a job, we don't have a place to live, or what to eat. We cannot afford our school expenses, so we drop out of school, get married, have children, go back to qualify for AFDC. That's all everyone does today.

Please think about it.

At group meetings in Orange County, parents could not emphasize enough the need for scholarships or extension of public assistance so that their children could complete high school. One woman said: "We are old, and we cannot learn. We only depend on our children to help us. Please tell the Government that they must help our children get an education."

Secondary migration. The movements of Hmong families from one community to another have been shown to play a powerful role in the quality of education Hmong children receive. The "reverse" migration of former Portland high school students who had moved to California and then returned to Portland to complete their schooling has been mentioned.

Some students have left well developed programs adapted for the Hmong to accompany their families to areas where the quality of elementary and high school programs was unknown and where specialized programs had yet to be developed. Some teachers who have worked closely with the Hmong express strong feelings about the impact of secondary migration on the

possibilities for Hmong youth. A teacher sadly recalled a Hmong family who moved to California. Their oldest son had been enrolled in a college special enrichment program for talented students from minority backgrounds. The teacher commented,

The pity is that this kid was making it. I was one of his teachers who pushed and encouraged and helped him get into the college program. He was assured of graduating. He cashed in a free college education, a stipend of \$90 a month plus all the extra help he wanted, to be a migrant laborer.

The teacher paused.

Every other immigrant group has sacrificed for their children. Some of the Hmong aren't doing that. Every time they uproot, the kids pay the price in terms of their education. Over and over, I've seen Hmong leave behind opportunities for their fantasies in another state. It's the kids who suffer quietly.

Inadequate counseling. Hmong teenagers consistently identify a need for counseling in school. Career counseling is seen as particularly crucial, since Hmong students feel they need guidance on career choices available in this country and the preparation they will need for these careers. In the new environment, Hmong adolescents have little idea of what the consequences of dropping out of school might be for their futures.

As an educated, articulate young Hmong man explained,

Very few Hmong youth have seen success. The only good thing is they have an opportunity to go to school. But, they need more help and guidance in school. If they do not get this they will have more problems than their parents because when they grow up they won't have the same opportunity as their parents to get assistance and won't be able to go to college, get a job, or get training . . .

As with so many other youth in poverty, Hmong teenagers are called upon to help with many family problems, are often oriented very much in the present, and need help, whether from educators or peers, to formulate

future plans. Even successful students stress the need for more help in planning their futures. A common problem for Hmong youth graduating from high school is that they do not know what the possibilities are for them. They do not have the model of their parents to follow and they do not know the wide range of jobs and careers that can be pursued in American society, let alone the means to develop them. Students feel this guidance must come from the schools, since their parents are still unfamiliar with the American educational and work worlds. Many students also suggest that their parents would benefit from some orientation about the American school system; currently, they have little idea of how they can participate in their children's education.

Suggestions for Improvement

From the foregoing it should be clear that education is a topic the Hmong have given considerable thought. During this Study, students, parents, Hmong bilingual aides, leaders and teachers all voiced opinions about the needs of Hmong students and ways to encourage them and help them in their studies. Students in several communities have established associations which are actively putting some of these ideas into practice, with some very positive results. Opinions and strategies regarding the nature and amount of instruction (whether mainstream, ESL, bilingual or specialized training), counseling, financial assistance, and parental roles are presented here.

Bilingual education. The topic of bilingual education for Hmong children provokes a variety of opinions. In general, people feel the need for bilingual education depends on the age and educational and

linguistic experience of the student. In Orange County, for example, individuals opposed to bilingual education are adamantly against taking up the time of small children with classes in Hmong, when in their view the children could learn English better and be more competitive if they were simply placed in classes with English-speaking children. However, most of the Hmong informants, bilingual aides, students and American high school teachers interviewed believe that for certain groups of Hmong children, and for certain subjects, bilingual instruction is needed or at the least bilingual aides in some classrooms are essential. The students who most need this help are those young children who have spoken only Hmong at home and need help for a short time, and those students who are 14-15 years old and have had very little previous educational experience or have limited English skills.

An American high school ESL teacher in Orange County stated that bilingual instruction would be very useful, especially in the social sciences, because the high schools require all students to pass the same competency exams, even if they must pass content areas in their own language. No content material is available there in Hmong as yet, and Hmong high school students find the textbooks in English very difficult. Hmong school aides and students agree that bilingual instruction in content areas would help students pass competency exams. At the time of the fieldwork in Orange County, an American high school teacher there was starting a Hmong literacy program for preliterate Hmong students.

A Hmong bilingual aide at a junior high school has set up special Hmong and Lao bilingual classes after school for students who need help:

I proposed a bilingual program at the beginning of last semester and it was approved by the school to teach bilingual education to the kids, but the school offered only 30 minutes a day and no credit for students. However, kids are doing well and learn how

to read and write faster. I think if the school could have this bilingual class on the regular schedule, and have the students learn it for credit, then it would be useful because it would be easier for them to learn new things if they are literate in their own language.

The degree of literacy in Hmong among Hmong children and youth in this country is not well documented. Numerous Hmong youth have taught themselves to read and write Hmong (either in the refugee camps or here in this country) and they often carry on correspondence in Hmong with relatives and friends in other communities, in other states and in other countries. Some participate in Hmong churches in which hymnals and Bibles written in Hmong are used. For example, most of the young people in Fort Smith said they had taught themselves to read Hmong and use Hmong hymnals in church. However, they write only in English. In Minneapolis, a Hmong teacher noted that only one Hmong junior high school student in five is literate in Hmong and even fewer elementary school children. The Minneapolis schools are perhaps unique in this Study because they attempted to address the issue of Hmong literacy training for students. They experimented briefly with teaching Hmong literacy, but decided against it.

The feeling in the Twin Cities is that nearly all students need ESL and bilingual instruction when they enter the schools. A supervisor in the Minneapolis LEP program noted that they are now beginning to see Hmong children who were born in the U.S. enter the first grade with no English (though some Hmong preschoolers do learn English from older siblings and English-speaking friends and come to school with little deficiency in English). The Minneapolis schools have a large bilingual Hmong staff who have developed texts in Hmong for teaching social science

subjects and, as noted previously, the schools have used Hmong bilingual staff to teach or tutor certain subjects in Hmong. Since the 1979-80 school year, bilingual staff in designated centers in the Minneapolis system have provided instruction in math, science and social science to Hmong students at the elementary level. However, there are no truly bilingual classrooms (in the classic bilingual education model) largely because no Hmong teachers are fully accredited.

Lack of accredited Hmong teachers is a problem in Fresno also. There, although the need for bilingual education for some Hmong children is recognized and in fact bilingual education programs for Spanish-speakers are in operation, no Hmong have become certified teachers in California. In addition, use of Hmong bilingual aides lacks continuity in the Fresno schools because the pay is not competitive with other social service jobs available to bilingual Hmong.

In response to the lack of accredited Hmong teachers in Minnesota, the University of Minnesota's College of Education organized a credentialing curriculum in bilingual education and obtained a training grant which would support a number of Hmong and Lao as well as Vietnamese and Spanish-speaking students beginning in January 1983. Students in this program were to be primarily teachers and teacher's aides currently working in the public schools.

In Dallas-Fort Worth, parents generally reported that Hmong students in elementary grades were learning and some were doing quite well. Hmong teenagers, however, said they thought not enough attention is paid to the language problems of elementary students. No bilingual education programs exist for Hmong in this community, but the teenagers felt that

the use of well-trained bilingual aides in elementary classrooms was appropriate. They were opposed to the use of such aides in high school, however. They said that aides invariably have no training in pedagogy and students waste time talking in their language to the aide and let the aide do things for them instead of concentrating on learning English. "The most important thing," one student said, "is to have a really good and helpful [American] English teacher."

ESL training. Provision of ESL instruction for Hmong elementary and secondary students is a nearly universal way of preparing these students for entry into the mainstream of the American educational system and is generally acclaimed as necessary, both by American teachers and the Hmong themselves. However, this subject, too, provokes mixed opinions and ideas about better ways to deal with the need to help students improve their English.

At a meeting in Orange County to discuss youth and education issues for this Study, Hmong high school students said that English was their favorite topic, and that their ESL teachers were the only teachers who gave them special attention. One student, however, who had been the only Hmong in his school and had finished high school last year, thought that ESL kept students back and that placement in ESL made some feel inadequate:

ESL class is just not that different. You learn the same things year after year. Some kids think that if they are in ESL they are not that good. If you teach easy things, they'll learn easy things. If you teach harder things, they'll learn harder things.

At a student meeting in Portland, students wondered why students are put in ESL even if they have been in grade school and have excellent English. One girl noted (in fluent English) that she had been in ESL for

five years. Also taking four non-ESL high school classes per day, she finds herself bored and unhappy in ESL.

Such differences in student and teacher perceptions of an individual student's need for ESL may be related to the generally academic, literary focus of many high school ESL programs. In this particular student's case, her facility in speaking English may well have far exceeded her writing skills. For some students this same focus on written English may work to the detriment of their oral skills. An ESL teacher in Orange County felt that the emphasis in high school ESL classes to prepare students to pass the statewide written California English competency exams gives too much priority to written skills and pre-empts spoken language development.

In numerous communities, Hmong student associations provide tutoring in English and other subjects. Since 1979 a Hmong college student organization has been actively doing various kinds of community work in Orange County. The philosophy of the Lao Students Association (LSA) is that young people will soon become responsible for supporting the community, and if they are given proper direction many of the problems currently besetting the Hmong might be alleviated or avoided in the future. LSA is registered as a California non-profit organization and has bylaws and regulations. The group was started through private donations, mostly on the part of members. For now, the functions of the group are run with the volunteer labor of the members and membership donations of \$2.00 a year.

The significance of LSA as an adjustment strategy is its youth focus, its future orientation, and its efforts to make higher education (which up to now has only been available to a privileged few young people) more

accessible. It is Hmong young people trying to help Hmong young people. The self-proclaimed goal of LSA is to provide educational, youth employment, social adjustment and career opportunities to Hmong who lack the knowledge or abilities needed to carry out future goals. Among the numerous successful service activities the LSA has undertaken is regular, ongoing tutoring for young people in math and English three days a week two hours per day in the evenings.

In Providence also Hmong college students tutor Hmong high school students in math and English. This volunteer program has been going for two years once a week for three hours during the school year and every day during the summer. From 20 to 40 students participate in the tutoring.

The Dallas-Fort Worth Hmong community has a very strong student organization to which most of the young people belong. Founded in 1978, the Hmong Student Association of Dallas and Fort Worth currently focuses on helping Hmong students become more dedicated and achieve their educational goals. As part of the association's activities, college student members have organized ESL classes for high school students with language problems. Although ESL is provided for an hour a day in school, most Hmong high school students feel it is a waste of time to attend. The students in this community seem particularly goal-oriented; they see ESL as an extra-curricular activity since it is not a requirement for graduation. One student argues that graduation credit should be given for ESL. (Minneapolis Public Schools have established a new system of graduation requirements in which an increasing number of credits are required for graduation by refugee students, including credits for ESL

and bilingual education.) None of the teenagers at the Dallas young people's meeting were currently taking ESL classes; some had never had an ESL class.

The precedent for these student organizations was set back in Laos when Hmong students in Vientiane first formed a non-traditional organization (described in Chapter I) that cut across kin ties to provide mutual support and help with educational problems. It is no accident that the small groups of educated young people today are finding this type of organization useful in addressing the cultural conflicts and educational problems which confront them and their peers as they try to make a new life for themselves and members of their families here in the country. Other activities and services of these student associations will be discussed as related topics are presented.

Other specialized training. Because of the difficulties Hmong high school students experience as they attempt to meet graduation requirements and the likelihood that most will be unable to attain a regular diploma, as well as the problems others face when they have to leave school before completing their studies, some public schools are beginning to recognize the need for vocational training for these students. The power sewing training program in Portland, mentioned previously, is an example. Hmong community leaders and school officials in Portland point out the need for more vocational training of Hmong students within the public school system. They note three types of training needs: (1) pre-vocational training (e.g., shop classes, use of basic tools, measurement, basic math skills, vocational ESL); (2) vocational training that will prepare students for entry into the

labor market (such as auto mechanics, sheet metal, printing, building construction); and (3) skill development training (math, reading, writing) to enable prepared Hmong youth to take advantage of other existing vocational training resources within the community, such as community colleges and proprietary vocational training schools, when they complete high school. As yet, this type of vocational training track for Hmong youth is only in the planning stage.

For students who are planning and striving to go on to college, special training in writing in English has been suggested. The frequent demands in college classes for written reports often stifles dedicated Hmong students' chances for success. Even the most successful Hmong high school students in Fresno feel they need much more writing instruction to continue their education effectively. Once they are mainstreamed out of ESL, they receive no further special help with their English writing skills.

Counseling and guidance. Whether it be regarding job search, career opportunities, preparations for higher education, or sex education and birth control, the need for counseling was voiced over and over again in community after community. Students in Dallas went as far as to say that they needed counselors rather than teacher's aides in high school. During the course of this Study, some interesting and innovative attempts at providing such counseling and guidance for Hmong students came to light.

The various Hmong student associations have put considerable effort into providing the guidance Hmong students desperately need. The Lao Students Association of Orange County provides ongoing counseling and

referral for young people regarding education and employment. A Hmong aide in Orange County also suggested that Big Brother and Big Sister programs would be useful to the younger students, because uneducated parents often do not encourage and help students study at home. College student members of the Hmong Student Association of Dallas and Fort Worth have counseled teenagers making crucial decisions about school, work and family. Most important, the college students serve as models for the high school students, enabling the younger students to gain confidence in their own ability to achieve academically. College students also provide help to high school seniors planning to enroll in college. This ranges from orientation programs and tours of college campuses to assistance with application forms for admission and financial aid.

The Dallas-Fort Worth Hmong Student Association has been influential in guiding student thinking about traditional patterns of early marriage and pregnancy. They have invited national Hmong leaders to speak to the members about the special educational concerns of the Hmong in the United States. Both these national leaders and the college students in the Association have emphasized the importance for teenagers to break away from the tradition of early marriage and postpone marriage until their formal education is complete. National leaders have pointed to the students' responsibility to their families and the larger Hmong community and the need for well-educated leaders. College students reiterate that theme and point out that teenagers have only to look at others in the Hmong community, particularly women with children, to see how difficult it is to continue one's education after marriage and the arrival of children.

A particularly innovative plan for addressing the problem of teenage pregnancy (and the consequent problems of the high dropout rate and potential for a continuing welfare dependence cycle) has been proposed by the Hmong mutual assistance association in Providence. A training course in birth control counseling would be set up for men and women from each clan. Planned Parenthood and the local neighborhood health center would provide the training to several individuals selected by each clan to become "counselors" for their clans. The plan attempts to build on accepted Hmong patterns of social organization and counseling by following clan lines and also by acknowledging the authority of community elders, inviting them to several orientation sessions on the topic and soliciting their "endorsement" of the newly trained clan family planning counselors. The result is expected to be a nucleus of Hmong within each extended family group that has accurate information about birth control and can make informed referrals. By involving elders, parents, college students and teenagers it is hoped that the subject of early pregnancy can be more openly addressed.

Another way of trying to prevent the problems caused by early marriage and pregnancy is suggested by a Hmong church in Orange County. The church group actively encouraging parents to deny their children the written permission necessary to marry under the age of 18 in California.

Financial assistance. For older high school students in particular, one of the most pressing needs is continued financial support through their high school years. Parents suggested that scholarships be set up or that public assistance be extended to allow these students to continue

their education. Some students attempt to resolve the conflict between their financial needs and their desire to complete their education by working and going to school. The following example of a young Hmong student shows dedication to education against difficult odds. A teacher pointed her out, saying:

She is 16 years old, Recently she had her first child. I never thought I'd see her again. Then she reappeared. But this time she works 40 hours a week, from 4 p.m. until midnight in a factory and shows up for school the next day at 8 a.m.

Parental roles. A common feeling particularly among teachers, but also among older Hmong students as well, is that the parents of Hmong students, especially those with no educational experience themselves, need more information about the American educational system so that they can understand the demands that schools make upon their children and give them the support needed to help them make the most of their schooling. The importance of parental support and encouragement is exemplified by Hmong college students in Orange County who credit parental support as an important factor in their decision to continue their education. Hmong student associations provide information to parents as one of their services to the community, but greater effort is needed on the part of the schools, teachers and parents themselves.

A highly educated Hmong man who works for Fresno County's Migrant Education Program identifies improved parental involvement in their children's education as a foremost concern. Although the schools try to include Hmong parents in parent-teacher meetings and school activities, the cultural and language barriers are difficult to overcome. Sustained effort at parent training, according to this man, rather than just occasional meetings, is needed to maintain parental involvement and interest in encouraging their children to study and do well in school.

Student Plans and Aspirations

When Hmong high school students were asked about their plans after graduation, the answers generally reflected the dirth of counseling and guidance noted above. Students answered "get married and have kids," "work," or "go to college," but they were necessarily vague about the details because of their lack of knowledge about the options. In general, even students who did have a specific job or career in mind--such as nurse, accountant, secretary, engineer, auto mechanic (answers given in Portland)--did not know that they should be taking certain courses in high school to help them qualify and prepare for such jobs. Similarly, students who thought they might want to go on to college had little information about where they should go, what the entry requirements were, how to apply for financial aid, etc.

A Hmong leader in Fort Smith explained that, in the Hmong way, the young people look to the elders for advice. He said that the leaders advise them according to the needs of the community. In keeping with this particular community's plans, young people are urged to study agriculture and business. The leaders expect that 20% of those graduating from high school will take jobs and 80% will go on to college. When young people at a meeting were asked how many would like to go to college, a girl noted: "For the girl it's very hard because we're expected to stay home and do the work and the boy will go to school." This statement is representative of attitudes in most of the communities studied.

The goals of young people at a meeting in the Dallas-Fort Worth area reflect a somewhat different orientation towards planning for the future. Several students not currently in high school were working and

either studying part-time or planning to go back to school. Students still in high school plan to go on to college if necessary after working to first save some money. In this community, both men and women had similar goals and seemed to be carrying them out: One man was working while his wife finished college; another had a wife in high school; one woman hoped to go to college and find secretarial work; another was working and studying for her G.E.D. while her husband was in college; another dropped out of college to have a baby and was working and planning to return to college for a 4-year degree. Most young people there were thinking about technical occupations, engineering or business. Why Dallas students' goals (and successes so far in achieving them) are so much more definite than those of students elsewhere is not clear. Among leadership, the type of families attracted to the area, the numerous opportunities for employment--particularly in high-tech industries--that exist in the area, the Hmong Student Association's efforts to counsel and orient other younger students all are factors.

The strongest and most commonly articulated aspiration of most Hmong students is the desire to help their families and their communities. Young people everywhere seem to be very aware of the significance of their role in shaping the future of the Hmong in this country. Already there are many examples of young Hmong people, in a reverse of traditional ways, taking on responsibilities for dealing directly with the dominant society, simply because they have the education and language skills to do so. However, they maintain respect for and act on the authority of the elders, and Americans who deal with these bright young people should not mistake them for today's leaders. But they are the leaders of tomorrow. College members of Hmong student associations show

their commitment to sharing their education by tutoring and counseling high school students, advising them on educational and personal issues, and offering workshops in Hmong for their elders on topics of interest such as American government and economics.

A recent college graduate's description of his decision to go to college exemplifies the students' commitment and feelings of responsibility to the community:

I looked at my family background and our living standard and it seemed to me that without education we won't be able to survive. There are a total of ten people in my family. I am the oldest son and I feel responsible to care for the younger family. I have the idea that without high education I won't be able to help my family, so no matter how hard it is for me, I will struggle and fight. That's why I take out loans--not only for my family, but also my whole community. In order for you to solve all those problems, you need education.

Higher Education

Based on the community case study findings and the nationwide telephone inquiry conducted in the course of this Study, it is estimated that between 300 and 350 Hmong students are currently attending college. Many more may be attending part-time, but their numbers are more difficult to ascertain. Most of the students are young men, though there are also some young women now in college. Some of the students are in 2-year colleges, others in 4-year colleges. If youths between the ages of 18-24 make up approximately 12-13% of the population, or roughly 7,000 individuals, this student population is a tiny elite of less than 5%, compared to a 31.8% college participation rate among that age group in the U.S. population as a whole.

In addition to the elevated high school dropout rate, college students identify financial problems as the primary reason more Hmong students are not attending college. Families often make great sacrifices to send their brightest to college. Most of the students interviewed were being supported by Basic Educational Opportunity Grants (BEOGs) and loans and lived at home with their families. Many students put off going to college to save enough money, others hold part-time jobs while in college. Thus many Hmong college students tend to be older than their American counterparts. Many Hmong students are in their late 20's and have families to care for. Across the country, Hmong students are enrolled in a wide range of coursework, including engineering and computer science, linguistics, political science, sociology, economics, all the sciences, and business. There have been several four-year college graduates in the past two years and a few Hmong are going on to graduate school (two in Dallas, for example, and one in the Twin Cities in law school).

Each of the seven communities studied in depth had at least a few students in college; four of the seven had over 20. The percentage of high school graduates who go on to college varies considerably from community to community. In Fort Smith there is only one college student, in part because of the very limited number of colleges in the area. In Portland, of the 23 high school graduates in 1983, some were looking for jobs, some were planning to enroll in community college, and a number were returning to live with their families in California. In Fresno approximately 8 Hmong are in college. Of the 25-30 expected to graduate from high school in 1983, most hoped to go to college, but few thought

they would be able to do so. In Providence, two-thirds of the 1983-84 graduating class were expected to go on to college; and in Dallas, where virtually all high school students graduate, at least 90% go on. The number of college students in each of the four communities with 20 students or more participating in higher education is presented below. However, the numbers themselves cannot be compared across communities, since the communities vary considerably in size. As noted above, the Dallas-Fort Worth Hmong community has by far the greatest percent of students going on to college.

Providence:	21 in the 1982-83 school year (1 woman) <u>23</u> of the 32 1983-84 high school graduates 44
Dallas-Fort Worth:	17 in the 1982-83 school year <u>15</u> by the end of 1983 32 (6 women)
Twin Cities:	40 in 1983 (1 woman)
Orange County:	20-25 (a few women)

As noted, getting financial support for college is a major issue for these students. In Fresno, limitations of the local economy and public assistance regulations work against students who are anxious to complete their college educations. Although some receive a BEOG, others are supported by welfare and are subject to regulations which prohibit them from going to college full-time. The lack of part-time jobs in the Fresno economy makes it hard for students to work their way through school. Some work full-time for several years and then return to school and live off their savings.

In Providence, seven students attending Rhode Island College, the state's 4-year college, are participants in Upward Bound, a federally funded, college enrichment program which provides special tutoring and

stipends for minority and economically disadvantaged students. Without this program, fewer Hmong would be enrolling in a 4-year college program directly after high school.

In response to the pressing need for financial support for education felt by Hmong students across the country, in 1983 an organization called Honor Mhong Opportunities for New Goals (H.M.O.N.G.) was formed in Minneapolis. The purposes of the organization are: (1) to provide financial aid to qualified Hmong students; (2) to provide Hmong students with information about financial aid; and (3) to inform the Hmong community regarding educational opportunities. The organization planned to apply to foundations and other organizations for scholarship funds to be distributed to Hmong applicants nationwide who demonstrate academic excellence. Recipients will be asked to contribute a share of income for 5 years after graduation. Whether this innovative endeavor to help solve a difficult problem will succeed remains to be seen.

The words of a Hmong parent in Fresno, who himself had no previous education, eloquently, yet succinctly sum up this major barrier to higher education for the Hmong. He wrote to the research staff:

I've had so much to worry about in my life. My lack of English, lack of experience and many social things. So I want to beg all of you in government that will you please help us and provide a fund for our children that are going to start on their life. They need more education after high school and we the parents couldn't provide money for them to go to college and so forth.

Groups with Special Needs

As this research progressed, it became clear that there was no easy answer to the question, "How are the Hmong doing in their resettlement here?" As the preceding sections of this chapter have illustrated, there are numerous aspects to resettlement, all of which must be considered in any evaluation of Hmong progress in settling in this country and attempting to become self-sufficient. In addition to the inter-related issues of employment, public assistance, economic development, learning to speak English or getting an education, this report has shown how the experience of the Hmong may differ with regard to each of these, depending on the particular geographical area in which they live and the configuration of the Hmong community there. Beyond these differences, however, the research team became aware of very strong individual differences in adjusting and making a life here.

There are certain conditions or circumstances which set the experience of some individuals off from that of others. Throughout the fieldwork for this Study, no matter the community, people emphasized the need for different responses to the question, "How are the Hmong faring?" It is impossible, they said, to talk about the Hmong as a whole. One must answer one way for illiterate adults with no English skills, another way for educated adults; for women it is different than for men; the elderly have a much different view of life here than do the youth; and children educated here are faring differently than teenagers who arrived with no previous education. These differences among individuals have been discussed or alluded to throughout this report.

Because the special needs of these groups were brought to the research team's attention again and again, they are highlighted here. Three groups deserve particular consideration: women, youth and the elderly.

Women

Because of the nature of traditional Hmong society, most Hmong women arrived in this country less equipped for successful adjustment than did most men. As pointed out in Chapter I, in Laos girls were less likely to go to school than boys and less likely to learn to read and write, and women were also not as likely to learn to speak Lao or another language as men. The nature of the social structure--the rather rigid division of labor and traditional expectations regarding social behavior--as well as the geographical isolation in which many people lived and the distances to available schooling, favored men in terms of educational, linguistic or literacy experience. And, as noted in the discussion of adults' acquisition of English, such personal background characteristics as previous education and literacy skills have been shown to be influential factors in how well or how rapidly individuals progress in learning English.

In addition, once here women's opportunities to learn English have been somewhat more limited than men's. This is because men and women have continued in their well-defined roles--that of the men being more externally oriented; that of the women being oriented toward maintenance of the home, cooking and child rearing. If opportunities for schooling here are limited, women will usually support their husbands' efforts to obtain an education. Though there are exceptions (and some will be cited

below), this general pattern of male/female interaction is persisting among the younger generation who mature and marry here. The discussion above about early marriage and pregnancy pointed out that from 80-95% of Hmong girls drop out before finishing high school, thus continuing the disadvantage that their mothers had before them--lack of education, limited English and literacy skills, and heavy familial responsibilities. If they follow in their mothers' footsteps, they may be helping to restrict their own large families to a life of dependence and poverty in this country. The likelihood of this is due to several inter-related factors: the economic situation of the community in which most live (poor economy, high unemployment, stiff competition even for entry-level jobs, not to mention well-paying jobs) and the relatively low level of skills their young husbands possess (many of whom have had to drop out of high school because of their age or the need to support a growing family) which limit them to entry-level, low-paying jobs. In community after community, families are realizing that two incomes are necessary for economic solvency. These young women, like their mothers, are even less prepared than their husbands to compete in the job market.

In all of the community meetings for women organized by the Study to address women's issues, the same barriers to progress with English were cited: lack of education, lack of literacy, lack of child care, lack of transportation (or easily accessible classes). These barriers also affect women's ability to participate in job training and to get jobs (and thus obtain experience). In addition, because of their orientation toward the home, women may be socially more isolated from mainstream American society, particularly in communities in which the Hmong have

congregated in large housing enclaves. Although some women may learn some English from their school-aged children, others are experiencing the awkward and unexpected situation of not being able to communicate in depth with their own children, who are learning new concepts in English and becoming more comfortable using English than Hmong in certain domains of their lives. Recall the comments of a Hmong man who lamented that he sometimes had to translate so that his wife and children could communicate. The fact that women have to rely on small children to help them in interactions requiring the use of English. (shopping, using the telephone, answering the door, etc.) is also discouraging. It often strengthens a growing conviction that one has to be young to learn English. Financial worries are an additional burden that women say keeps them from learning well and even from attending school at all.

Lack of child care has been a major factor inhibiting women's attendance in ESL classes. Programs in Portland, Fort Worth and Minneapolis which have provided child care have been well attended and appreciated. However, when funding diminishes, one of the first things to be cut is child care. The experience of a woman with a Fort Worth program exemplifies this problem. She reported that before 1981 she and many other Hmong working mothers attended an ESL class in Fort Worth because there was a nursery at the school. The class met from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. She said the course was "hard, but everyone loved it, everyone did it." But these women's participation ended when budget cuts forced the closing of the child care program. A program in Minneapolis that offers child care is facing similar cuts.

Women who are separated, divorced or widowed have additional worries. Although they qualify for AFDC if they have children, they are truly dependent on public assistance because of their lack of English, education, literacy and job experience and their child care responsibilities. They become increasingly desperate as their children grow up because their resources for maintaining the family diminish. The children reach 18, their AFDC grants are cut, but they usually are not yet prepared to find jobs and there is no money to support them in school or further training. The comments of a woman in Orange County are typical of the feelings of many women who are the heads of their households:

When we lived in our country we had many children. We knew how to do many things to support ourselves. Here everything is just money. We're always thinking about welfare, how can we support ourselves after it runs out.

Another woman explained her experience:

I have never received any kind of job training in my life. What I did a long time ago was helping my parents in the field. After I married my husband, he joined the army and held a good position so we had enough income to support the family, so I didn't do anything after.

A widow in the Twin Cities noted the difficulties of having the sole responsibility for young children, but expressed the traditional hope of being able to rely on her children when they were grown:

It is very hard for young widows with no grown children. Grown children can take care of you. I always dream my son will be an important person in the future. I look forward to the time when my son will be good to me, and my daughter will help me. I look at myself as the father and mother of my children.

Whether or not her children would be able to live up to this mother's dream is yet to be seen. They have many obstacles to overcome to be able to become self-sufficient and provide for their mother in her old age.

The percent of women working is far smaller than the percent of men with jobs. Because of the reasons cited above, women have a more difficult time finding employment. However, the number is growing, as parents recognize the need to have at least two incomes to support their large families. Typically, more women are working in communities such as Dallas-Fort Worth, Fort Smith, Providence and Portland, where entry-level jobs are more available and public assistance is less available than in communities such as the Twin Cities, Orange County and Fresno (which are also the communities of heaviest Hispanic concentration). Although the women's meetings held for this Study in each community did not represent a random sample of women, comparisons across communities of the percent of women working who attended the meetings may be insightful. For example, of the fifteen women attending the meeting in the Twin Cities, none of them had a full-time job. In contrast, all of the 8 women attending the meeting in Dallas were currently employed, as were 11 out of 18 at the meeting in Fort Smith.

In general, women who work continue to carry most of the responsibility for child care and home maintenance and have little time or energy for attending ESL classes to improve their English. This causes them to worry about the future, because they are aware that without better English skills they will be passed over when the opportunity for job advancement arises. They also know that if they are laid off, they may have increasing difficulty finding another job.

There are examples of husband and wife sharing home and work responsibilities and of supportive husbands who care for the children while their wives attend English classes. Some families are so

determined to improve their lot that they maintain highly stressful schedules. As a woman in the Dallas-Fort Worth Hmong community explained: ". . . in most cases, both husband and wife are working, one at night and the other during the day. It is necessary for both to work [in spite of having small children] in order to survive on their wages." The reason for working different shifts, she said, is that ". . . babysitting is very expensive and they can't afford it." Families in Providence in which both parents work also tend to work opposite shifts to split the child care responsibilities. A family in Fort Smith had a different schedule: Both husband and wife were working nights and taking care of the children during the day. However, the husband noted that the lack of sleep was affecting his health.

Youth

The problems of Hmong youth have been discussed in detail in the Education section of this report. However, as with the women, Hmong youth face particular problems which, if not resolved, will have a serious, detrimental impact on the future of the Hmong as a whole in this country. The most critical of these problems are the focus of this section.

The plight of young Hmong women is particularly bleak. As noted above, the majority of Hmong teenage girls are following the cultural pattern that caused their mothers to face tremendous disadvantages in adapting to life in this country. Unless these young women begin to postpone marriage or at least pregnancy until after they graduate from high school, they will continue to be unable to help improve their growing families' chances for a useful, productive and satisfying life here.

Although young men are far more likely to continue their schooling once they have married, they still face difficult problems. They are often caught in a vicious cycle from which they seem powerless to escape. When they turn 18 and if they will not have completed high school by their nineteenth birthday, their AFDC grant will be cut. For most Hmong families, this cut puts a heavy financial burden on the family. They are almost never able to support the student's continued schooling and he or she feels obligated to drop out of school and find work. As noted previously, such students are not ready to compete for jobs with American students and adults--native speakers of English with far more years of schooling and knowledge of the job market. Typically, such Hmong students are either already married or get married and have children and end up applying for public assistance as the only remaining resource to deal with their dilemma. In some communities where General Relief (GR) is available, the regulations for eligibility also make school attendance impossible for these young people. One can only receive GR if one is "employable" which means available for work and not in school.

Complicating the situation for many young men, in particular, is a lack of information about public assistance regulations and a fear of additional cuts in their families' allotments. The example has been cited earlier of young people over 18 in Orange County who were still living at home and were afraid to fill out any forms or job applications that required them to give their address because they feared further cuts in their parents' grants.

The Elderly

Elderly Hmong in this country also experience some additional problems that deserve attention. Individuals over 45 or 50 represent the group least likely to adapt well to life here. This, of course, is not surprising. Nor is it unusual. In fact, it is a typical pattern in the history of most immigrant groups in this country. Perhaps the biggest problem faced by the elderly is psychological. Coming from an agricultural environment with which they were completely familiar and in which they had considerable independence, to a totally foreign, technological society in which almost nothing seems as it should be, older Hmong suffer from feelings of helplessness which often result in hopelessness and despair. The barriers to learning English experienced by other Hmong (lack of education, literacy, etc.) combine with the added impediment of age to make learning to speak English seem impossible for most over the age of 40 or 45. If they attend classes, they usually make little progress. They often get discouraged and drop out. Some never attend classes at all, feeling certain that they cannot learn. The same barriers also make it nearly impossible for individuals in this group to find work. Yet, unlike Laos where the retirement age is 55, as one man noted, here people may be expected to be looking for work even beyond that age.

In Laos elders were highly respected, fully contributing members of their society. In the U.S. this position has been eroded somewhat. Young people still listen to them for advice, but Hmong youth are gradually taking on positions of responsibility in their communities, particularly with regard to matters concerning the Hmong community's

interaction with the larger American society around it. This situation has been unwittingly encouraged by American service providers, teachers and others interested in the Hmong, because they have tended to consider the Hmong individuals with whom they could best communicate in English to be the spokespersons from the Hmong community as a whole. Usually these individuals are young, educated Hmong men who have not yet reached the maturity and stature necessary to be considered leaders in the community's eyes.

As with all group characterizations, there are exceptions. A 65-year-old man in Portland has learned sufficient English to work in the Portland schools as a presenter of Hmong culture, primarily music. He is considered to be an intellectually exceptional man within Hmong society. However, the vast majority of older Hmong are not at ease with their situations here and would prefer to be back in Laos. Older individuals who have no children and live with other families often subsist at minimal levels and feel they are a burden to the families that have taken them in. Even if they are physically cared for, some people have few resources and little hope left. One old woman expressed her extreme despair, saying, "I can't live here. There is no one to help me. I want to jump into the river and commit suicide, but there is no one to take me to the river." The comments of others are equally eloquent. Another woman said:

Now I am 50. I receive \$20 cash and \$50 to buy food. I don't have enough to support myself and I have a hard time staying in the U.S. How can I stay in this country? I feel bad, there is no one to support me.

A 65-year-old man explained:

I feel shame, because we came to eat others' [taxpayers'] belongings. Sometimes they love and care, but sometimes they hate and put us down. Of course, the standard of living in this country is many times better than in Laos, but in order to have a happy life, we must be able to cope with the problems we have. For me, life here is more difficult than fighting in the battlefield.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding chapter has described the multiple and varied experiences of the Hmong in this country, their worries and their hopes. Many differences were seen in the social and economic climates of resettlement across the seven communities studied in depth and among the responses of individual Hmong. The picture of Hmong resettlement thus painted is certainly not uniform; it is not entirely negative or positive in any given community. In this chapter some of the reasons for these differences will be reviewed as the Study findings are summarized. The findings are presented here within the framework of three major questions originally posed at the outset of this research:

- (1) What has been the resettlement experience of the Hmong?
- (2) What resettlement efforts and economic strategies have provided effective results for the Hmong?
- (3) How might current strategies be changed to result in more effective resettlement and long-term adjustment of the Hmong?

In answer to the third question, recommendations for future improvements in the resettlement process are made.

In considering these findings and recommendations, the reader is reminded to keep two facts in mind: (1) the point of reference in time of this report is approximately mid-1983, soon after the case studies and other data collection activities were completed--naturally many conditions have since changed; and (2) much of the detailed information supporting the findings summarized here is available only in the cited case study reports.

During the course of this Study, it became clear that there are many popular misconceptions or myths about the Hmong and their resettlement

experience in the United States. Some of these misconceptions are held by the public at large, others by some resettlement workers and service providers, and some by many Hmong themselves. Although no complete catalog of such myths can be presented here, it may be useful to point out some of them as they relate to the findings considered.

What Has Been the Resettlement Experience of the Hmong?

One of the most important findings of the Study is the variability of Hmong resettlement among different locales. The extent and patterning of economic indicators such as rates of unemployment, labor force participation and welfare utilization as well as the availability of English language and job training vary widely among the sites of Hmong resettlement. Average or population-wide statistics in this regard are quite misleading. It is thus extremely difficult to provide a meaningful overall sense of how the Hmong are faring. Answers must be couched in terms of particular communities. Furthermore, because the majority of Hmong individuals live in a few large enclaves (in Minnesota and the Central Valley of California), "typical" figures for unemployment or welfare utilization rates may be statistically representative of the largest number of Hmong but not at all representative of the Hmong living in many small communities across the country.

MYTH: Hmong resettlement is faring pretty much the same across the U.S. As will be pointed out throughout this section, the results of this Study are precisely the opposite. The picture of high rates of unemployment and welfare utilization that describes the Hmong in Fresno, for example, is exactly the opposite of conditions prevailing in Dallas.

How Are the Hmong Faring in Terms of Employment, Dependence, and Adjustment?

Community differences and similarities. As noted, economic indicators vary widely across resettlement communities. The seven Hmong communities studied in depth exemplify a range of economic situations, from every household in the community having someone employed, at one extreme, to 80-85% dependence on public assistance, at the other. In Fresno and Orange County, California, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, for example, a small percentage of Hmong households have someone employed and dependence on public assistance is very high. In Providence, Rhode Island, and Portland, Oregon, the picture is more balanced: In these communities well over half of the households have someone employed and between 35 and 50% have multiple wage earners; less than a third of the households depend on public assistance to survive. In the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, and Fort Smith, Arkansas,* Hmong communities there is nearly 100% employment and no utilization of welfare.

Although in general the Hmong appear to have higher rates of welfare dependence than the population at large in most host communities, the large majority of Hmong families interviewed in the course of this Study reported negative attitudes towards relying on welfare as a means of economic support. Most Hmong see it as only a temporary if necessary evil, needed only for short-term, transitional assistance until they can secure suitable employment to support their families. Most Hmong have a strong work ethic and greatly prefer working and self-reliance to

*The situation in Fort Smith changed shortly after fieldwork for this study was completed. Approximately half of the Hmong there moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where both men and women obtained much higher paying jobs than they had had in Fort Smith. Others moved to Wisconsin or to California.

idleness and dependence on public assistance. They are quick to point out that there was no welfare in Laos and they have always supported themselves through their own labor.

Although some welfare and employment service workers believe that many Hmong are lazy and do not wish to work when they can remain on welfare, a careful examination of the Study's data suggests that such individuals are uncommon among Hmong. Some Hmong, with large families to support, poor educational backgrounds and few marketable skills, do not jump at an opportunity to leave the welfare rolls for a minimum wage job that brings home less cash than their welfare benefits and often provides little or no medical coverage. Hmong family heads in such circumstances probably behave as members of other groups do--when faced with strong economic disincentives to working, they remain out of the labor force. However, there are many individuals in the case study sites who have chosen to work in spite of the attendant economic loss for their families. The strength of the Hmong work ethic in the face of such powerful disincentives indicates the folly of the following popular misconception:

MYTH: Hmong prefer to stay on welfare instead of working.

Differences among individuals. Beyond the influence of geographic location and related variations in regulations and availability of services, the resettlement experience of the Hmong in this country also varies considerably depending on the characteristics of individual Hmong--the experiences they had in Laos and Thailand, their educational backgrounds, their knowledge of literacy and of English, their exposure to urban life and Western ways, their age and station in life. Here the

status of and outlook for groups with specific characteristics are summarized to illustrate the influence of these differences and provide examples of how the Hmong are faring.

1. Well-educated individuals with good English skills and good jobs or independent businesses. By most standards, these individuals have experienced successful resettlement to date and have excellent future prospects. The Dallas-Fort Worth community has a high concentration of individuals with these characteristics although there are some in every community. A good proportion of the Hmong in Dallas are persons who, having studied English, developed job skills and pursued higher education in Laos or elsewhere in the U.S., came to the Dallas area to take advantage of employment opportunities there. Their economic success has enabled some to buy homes. The Dallas-Fort Worth community has probably the highest ratio of high school graduates and college students to the general Hmong population of any Hmong community in the U.S., and the orientation among the young people is strongly in the direction of success in American terms, i.e., through employment in American business, including electronics and communication. Thus, a significant segment of the Hmong in the Dallas area appears to have already been successfully resettled, with a very good outlook for the future.

2. Workers with limited English, little or no literacy skills, and few job skills. Individuals who fall into this category may appear to be attaining self-sufficiency, but their apparent "success" often has a very temporary quality about it. Some in this group may later suffer serious consequences from having obtained immediate employment and economic self-sufficiency rather than investing in more education or English language and job training. Many are people who have been working but who

have not learned English or developed job skills. Many of them are clearly worried about their future, and with good reason. In the secondary labor market, they depend on the economic fluctuations of the community in which they live and even of the nation and the world. Their entry-level jobs have not been stable. Many have been laid off, and many others fear being laid off in the future, particularly because they feel they will be unable to compete for another job due to their limited language and job skills. Even those who are not laid off will find themselves in dead-end jobs; many see little opportunity for advancement without some means of improving their English or job skills or both. Most work at physically difficult jobs or must combine work and child care in such rigorous schedules that they do not have time or energy to attend English classes. In some communities, many in this group are at even higher risk because they have no health insurance.

3. Unemployed individuals with limited English, little or no literacy skills and few job skills. The majority of Hmong adults in this country still fall into this category. Although they would like to find jobs, they feel their limited English and literacy skills are an all-too-effective barrier to filling out job applications or meeting job requirements. They also lack information about the job search process in this society and about the job market. Women in particular, most of whom fall into this category, also cite heavy child care responsibilities and lack of transportation as barriers to obtaining further English instruction, job training or getting a job. These individuals lead an unstable existence fraught with insecurity because of their dependence on public assistance. Most live in large Hmong enclaves and depend on other more educated Hmong (often their children) for help with the demands of daily life. A large number of Hmong are likely to continue this

dependent existence, particularly individuals who are over 40 or who have given up on the possibility of learning enough English to be able to participate to some extent in the alien world that surrounds them. Those who hope to improve their lot in the future continue to study English, look for opportunities to make American friends, and seek job training and employment. In the short run, some who do not improve their skills may find entry-level jobs if the economy improves or they move to a location in which there are more jobs. As noted, above, however, such improvements for these individuals may well be temporary.

4. High school dropouts. These young people have dropped out of high school due to age limitations, the cut-off of financial assistance, the pressures of early marriage and growing families, academic difficulties or a combination of such factors. They usually have relatively limited English skills, a sketchy general education (having entered the educational system very late in their young lives) and no job skills or orientation to employment in this society. In the short-term future the spectre of the "welfare cycle" looms large for these young people. Unable to compete for jobs and without financial support for further education or training, they are likely to fall back on public assistance as a last resort, just as their parents have done. If they are "lucky" they may find entry-level jobs that require only limited English and job skills, in which case their future will resemble the apparent "success" of employed adults with similarly limited skills. Particularly motivated young people may continue to study English and adult education and try to improve the lot of their young families.

5. The elderly. Persons over the age of 40 or 50 who lack education and English ability, as most of them do, generally hold no hope of learning to speak and read English or of obtaining employment. With

little possibility of self-employment such as farming, they stay at home, sometimes caring for children while younger adults work. Some older people are content with the relative comfort of their lives here; others long very much for their former self-sufficient rural life in Laos. The outlook for their future here is unlikely to change. Most have the security of knowing that their children will provide for them whatever way they can. As noted in this report, the elderly who have no children feel they are a burden to their relatives and community and face the future with despair.

6. Children. Hmong children seem to have the brightest future--and in fact most Hmong adults pin their hopes for the future on the progress of their children. Elementary school children seem to be adapting with relatively little difficulty--to the extent that their teenage brothers and sisters see them as being very Americanized--"really just about the same like the American kids." Once they enter the school system and overcome the initial difficulties of speaking only Hmong, they make rapid progress and learn to speak English like their native-speaker classmates. Those entering the system at a slightly older age may continue to lag behind their peers in language skills. Academically, Hmong children, especially the girls, may suffer if their parents do not provide sufficient encouragement and support for their studies (such as setting aside quiet space and time to study). When they reach adolescence they may face some educational and social problems if the traditional practices of early marriage and pregnancy are still encouraged by their families and communities. The extent to which this group will continue to marry young, drop out of school and have large families will likely have serious implications for their own

self-sufficiency and adjustment. On the other hand, if these children were to return to Laos in the future, they would experience considerable difficulty adapting.

7. High school and college students. Hmong youth straddle two cultures. Often they experience conflicts between the values of the "American" society they encounter in school and with friends who are not Hmong and the traditional Hmong values stressed in their own families and community. In addition to having a strong attachment to their families and to "being Hmong" they often wish to be accepted as American. One young man described the conflicts he is experiencing as he tries to succeed the American way by attending college, but has to postpone marriage for his goals:

The leaders don't listen to me because I'm not married . . . in Hmong culture you can't be a man without a family of your own. This value tells Hmong to marry. It is very difficult to be a college student and not married. I want to go to graduate school so that I can help my people. With a wife I can never do that so I'm keeping myself single. Nobody knows the isolation I feel in my heart.

Despite such conflicts, the future of many of these students seems bright. Many are remarkably motivated to succeed with their higher education while at the same time being extremely conscientious about their responsibilities to family and community. In particular they recognize the need to be role models for younger students. A young man in Dallas presented his views:

I just suggest that young teenagers not get married so soon, because you have to be examples to the young Hmong people to start to make our Hmong people have a good education, higher education so they can make a better living and to make other people understand your job. Don't follow my way, don't get married so soon, don't fool around, just stay in school and do your best and have a bright future. For myself, I am married now, but I still got a plan. I want to be an engineer some day. But I just wish. I am trying hard. Right now, I let my

wife graduate from high school and after that we can both go to college together. I don't know what she wants to be, but as for me, I want to be an electronics engineer.

Though these students appear to be following the "American dream," they still intend to take on the responsibility of supporting their parents in their parents' old age and they hope to use the skills they gain through better education to help the Hmong. Most young people see themselves as Hmong and wish to remain Hmong, but armed with skills and knowledge of the larger society in which they now live. The choices that they face are tough and often confusing, but their outlook for the future is positive. As one young man confided:

I think we know it's hard, and we all want a college education. We understand that we might go in the wrong direction and we are worried about that. We want to go in the right direction.

Are There Areas of Employment in Which the Hmong Have Been Particularly Successful?

Although Hmong have worked in a wide variety of jobs in this country, there are several types of work in which many Hmong have been employed: wood and metal fabrication (primarily men); commercial sewing (primarily women); seasonal agricultural labor (men and women); and electronic assembly work (men and women). These categories of employment seem to draw on existing skills or aptitudes that the Hmong bring from Laos; agricultural work, sewing and metal and wood fabrication were valued activities in Laos.

MYTH: All Hmong want to farm. There is no evidence that most Hmong see farming as a viable future for them in the United States. Many if not most Hmong express a longing for their former subsistence agricultural lifestyle of the mountains of Laos. Many have also expressed interest in farming here in the United States, particularly if they could be self-employed rather than laboring on someone else's

land. However, those who have tried to make it as small farmers have had very mixed economic results, and, as word of the problems that must be overcome (raising capital, learning about irrigation and fertilizers and pesticides, marketing and other aspects of modern commercial agriculture) has spread, fewer families are drawn towards farming. Other Hmong have little interest in farming in the United States because they have developed other occupational goals. In Hmong communities where interest in farming is relatively high (such as in Fresno), community members see farming as just one type of economic activity that families can engage in to become self-sufficient; less than half of the families contacted by the Study in Fresno expressed interest in farming.

What Do Resettlement Workers and the Hmong Regard as the Major Impediments to Effective Hmong Resettlement and Self-sufficiency?

There are a number of barriers that were consistently identified as impediments to effective resettlement, particularly with regard to attainment of economic self-sufficiency. Among the most commonly mentioned factors were:

- o the structure of the welfare system, particularly its restrictions on income supplementation, its linking of medical assistance to cash assistance, and in some states the lack of welfare for needy families having two unemployed parents (These and other problematic aspects of the rules and regulations are widely seen as discouraging a gradual transition from dependence to self-sufficiency.)
- o radical differences between traditional Hmong life in Laos and life here in the United States, with attendant gaps in the Hmong's educational background, job skills relevant to an industrialized society and English language skills
- o psychological and medical problems stemming from years of exposure to civil warfare in Laos with widespread loss of homes and loved ones and the subsequent loss of family members, homeland and lifestyle as Hmong became refugees in Thailand and the United States
- o resettlement policies which often placed important relatives far away from one another or in poor economic environments, paving the way for later secondary migration (Others see the secondary migration itself as the problem.)

- o traditional Hmong patterns of marrying and having children at an early age, which result in extremely high rates of high school dropouts (particularly among young girls) and, it is widely feared, later dependence on welfare when poorly educated young parents with young children cannot support themselves in the labor market

What Role Does Secondary Migration Play in the Resettlement of the Hmong? What Are the Reasons for Secondary Migration among This Group? What Are the Implications for Resettlement Strategies?

Few Hmong knew much about their destination in the U.S. before arriving here. If they were lucky enough to have been in correspondence with earlier-arriving friends or relatives, they might have received some news about the climate or living conditions. Those sponsored by Americans did not choose where they were initially resettled. If they have since moved to another location, that site was most likely deliberately selected. The communities of Fort Smith and Dallas-Fort Worth are examples of locations to which nearly all of the Hmong residents very deliberately chose to move based on information about employment, the economy, or opportunities for farming. All of the other communities in this Study have also received secondary migrants bent on improving their lot. Most have also lost large numbers to Fresno and other communities in the Central Valley formed almost entirely by secondary migrants.

Secondary migration has served three overall functions in the resettlement process of the Hmong in the United States: (1) solving specific problems, such as family reunification, access to more favorable economic environments, or the resolution of factional strife between different groups of Hmong; (2) providing a means to explore new settings and ways of living in the United States, e.g., developing family farms,

trying rural rather than urban settings, or living in large enclaves rather than smaller, more isolated resettlement communities; and (3) maintaining hope for the future through the psychological renewal experienced through experimentation and movement.

A wide variety of individual motives have been reported for the particular moves made by families and kin groups from one setting to another, in line with these three overall functions. Some of the more commonly cited reasons for moving include: desire to reunite family and kin group members; interest in farming; need to maintain eligibility for public assistance benefits; better employment prospects; escaping from crime-ridden and prejudice-ridden neighborhoods; better education and training opportunities; preference for a warm climate. In most instances, combinations of these motives prompted the decisions of individual families and groups of families to move from one locale to another.

Several misconceptions have arisen about Hmong secondary migration:

MYTH: Secondary migration is an entirely problematic aspect of Hmong resettlement.
The considerable publicity and the many problems that have accompanied the massive influx of Hmong into the Central Valley of California have overshadowed smaller but economically more beneficial migrations, such as those into the Dallas-Fort Worth area and the earlier migration into Orange County, California, both of which were associated with increased Hmong employment. Furthermore, even the large migration into the Central Valley, despite its obvious problems of low labor force participation and high welfare dependence, has had its positive aspects, such as the joy of family reunification (often after years of separation due to the War and its aftermath) and the positive psychological results of Hmong having taken direct (if not altogether promising) steps towards establishing a future in their new country and exploring alternative lifestyles here.

MYTH: All Hmong want to move to the Central Valley. Many Hmong have chosen not to migrate to the Central Valley, but to remain in their primary resettlement sites to maintain their jobs or friendships in the host communities. Others have chosen to move to other areas in search of better prospects for jobs and economic self-sufficiency. In some cases, those who have stayed behind, after others have moved to the Central Valley, now form successful and largely self-sufficient communities, as in Portland.

MYTH: A few prominent Hmong political leaders such as General Vang Pao make all the decisions about the movement of Hmong from one city to another. Although prominent individuals such as General Vang Pao certainly exert much influence over a wide range of issues, decisions to move are generally made at the lineage group and household levels. Groups who have always lived together tend to stick together here and move together. Sometimes individual families choose to stay behind, particularly if they have good jobs and housing and their children are doing well in school. In other cases they will wait and join their group later. Some families are left behind to allow a few to get a toe hold in the new area, establish housing, and test the employment, welfare and social service opportunities available. Still others are deliberately left behind to facilitate the return in case the new location does not work out well.

In examining the role of secondary migration and its implications for the resettlement of the Hmong, the likelihood of further secondary migration must be considered. On the whole, secondary migration has served diverse functions in the process of Hmong resettlement and has led to a mixed set of outcomes. The Hmong, it must be remembered, have been a migrant population for centuries before coming to this country and have long relied on migration as a strategy for adjusting to changing

circumstances. Even though thousands of Hmong have chosen to migrate to selected cities within this country, few have profound loyalty to the particular locale in which they are now living. Their main ties to a place are relatives and friends, who can and likely will move with them if they decide to leave. The elements contributing to secondary migration discussed in this report--such as state differences in welfare policies, unemployment and educational opportunities--are largely structural. In most cases moving once has not eliminated all major problems with available services and opportunities. If the best hope for the future seems to be in another place, many may move again.

Most Hmong in Providence, for example, said they didn't know the best place to live. One man said the Hmong should look for a state that has both jobs and a garden. "The old can work in the garden and the young in the factory." Men in the Twin Cities said they would be willing to go anywhere for a good job. What brought them there, apart from the reunification of families, was the promise of kind treatment and good educational opportunities. What will take them elsewhere now is loss of cash and medical assistance, failure to find employment, or job offers or greater possibilities of supporting themselves somewhere else. The possibility of farming, the security provided by a family garden, and a liberal welfare program to fall back on in case things don't work out are all part of the attraction of the Central Valley of California. Even men who are employed in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, known for its high employment rate and for the opportunities it has offered the Hmong, said without hesitation that they would move if they were to lose their jobs.

There are some Hmong, however, who have made very conscious decisions not to move to another spot. In spite of the very strong pull to move to

the Central Valley of California some Hmong individuals and groups have decided that the very density of large Hmong communities will diminish their possibilities for success. A family with five children in Portland exemplifies this type of decision. They live on a small SSI check which the disabled husband receives and a tiny state grant for a severely retarded child. They decided to stay in Portland, even though they would receive far more public assistance in California. The wife explained:

I have so many kids. If we moved down there, it would be fun for them--there are lots of Hmong, but they wouldn't learn or study. I stayed here because I have children and they can go to school here and learn.

This woman's husband is a member of a clan that made a concerted decision to try to make it without moving to California, an example of the ways in which kin ties sometimes discourage secondary migration. Nevertheless, individuals in the clan do not rule out the possibility that they might move at some future date.

What Resettlement Efforts and Economic Strategies Have Provided Effective Results for the Hmong?

A wide variety of strategies and approaches to resettlement have been tried by the Hmong and by those seeking to help them adjust to life in the United States. It is very difficult to evaluate these diverse efforts because their outcomes are confounded by differences among the resettlement sites and the Hmong individuals involved. Some efforts may appear "successful" because the particular Hmong individuals involved are highly likely to succeed regardless of the kinds of assistance given to them (because of their high level of motivation or previous education or English ability, etc.), whereas other efforts may appear nearly pointless

because they attempt to help the more difficult cases (e.g. the elderly, or those without previous work experience). Other strategies may appear to be working in some settings, but their effectiveness may be tied to particular situations or circumstances; employment strategies operating in areas with a high demand for labor, for example, may well appear successful in terms of how many Hmong find jobs, whereas other approaches will appear unproductive because there are so few jobs available in the areas involved. In principle, of course, such factors can be taken into account in designing evaluations of particular resettlement approaches and activities, but refugee resettlement has tended to operate, understandably enough, in a crisis-solving manner, and little thought in general has been given to collecting information or planning projects to facilitate assessment of their relative effectiveness. Such limitations must be kept in mind in examining the suggestions below.

How Are Problems Being Handled? What Kinds of Solutions Are Being Tried by Different Resettlement Communities and by the Hmong Themselves?

A variety of approaches to solving problems has been tried in the resettlement of the Hmong communities examined in this Study. Some approaches have been initiated by the Hmong themselves, others by resettlement agencies and individuals working with Hmong.

Hmong strategies. Hmong-initiated strategies in general appear to be extensions of their lifestyle and adjustment strategies from Southeast Asia. As noted above, secondary migration, a widespread response of Hmong communities to resettlement problems, has long been a Hmong problem-solving strategy. It has been used here to solve various problems, including poor employment and training opportunities, unfavorable welfare regulations, community tensions, and separation of

family and kin group members. Other strategies used by the Hmong also have roots in their past experience in Laos and Thailand. Hmong families and lineage groups have methodically pooled their resources--housing, capital, labor resources, and skills and knowledge pertinent to life in the United States--to facilitate their adjustment and development here. Families have doubled and tripled up in low-income housing, pooled savings from their meager incomes, and supported the education of their brightest and most capable youngsters to serve the wider interests of the lineage group. These collective resources have been planfully invested in numerous efforts to stimulate and advance the adjustment of the group to life in the United States; such efforts have included economic development activities (starting small grocery stores or farms, for example) or putting selected children through school (by providing financial support for the selected youngster).

Hmong have also approached problem-solving through reliance on traditional forms of leadership and decision-making. The multiple forms of leadership that developed in Laos and Thailand have all been deployed here in the United States for resettlement purposes. Traditional kin-based leadership and decision-making practices have been used to solve problems related to pooling group resources and migration of families and kin groups from one area to another, for example. When problems arise on other levels, other forms of leadership and decision-making have come into action. In dealing with problems in service provision, education and relationships with host communities, Hmong have relied on their young, relatively well-educated and bilingual individuals for liaison with non-Hmong individuals and resettlement agencies.

Strategies of resettlement agencies and others working with the

Hmong. A variety of problem-solving strategies have been used by agencies and others involved in the resettlement process. One of the most effective seems to be the employment of bilingual youth and young adults in key jobs that affect delivery of resettlement services.

Placement of such bilingual individuals within agencies serving the Hmong (ranging from the schools to welfare and employment offices) has been an adjustment strategy that both Hmong and resettlement agencies have relied on for solving problems. Bilingual welfare case workers, employment specialists, teacher aides, medical paraprofessionals, among others, have proved indispensable in larger Hmong resettlement sites, including Portland, the Twin Cities, Providence and Orange County. Their employment is important not only because bilingual, culturally sensitive individuals are necessary for effective service delivery, but also because the participation of these individuals in service provision allows Hmong communities themselves to learn to deal with the complex, institutionalized methods of administration and problem-solving in this country. The Hmong, unlike many other immigrant groups, have very limited prior experience with and understanding of bureaucratic institutions. Although adult ESL and cultural orientation programs provide individuals with a baseline of knowledge about society here, the many subtleties of dealing with educational, health and social service institutions in the United States must be learned from the inside; the employment of bilingual Hmong in such jobs has thus proved very effective for the overall resettlement of the Hmong. This has been accomplished not by employing bilingual Hmong merely as interpreters or translators to assist other professionals, but actually by training and hiring Hmong as professional and technical workers within these agencies.

Other strategies that host communities with large Hmong populations have found effective include coordinating the delivery of services to Hmong across the numerous agencies that normally to work independently of each other. Such coordination of services has been achieved in various ways, including through establishment of refugee service consortia and centralized intake and case management systems. However it has been implemented, such coordination seems to have facilitated solving problems associated with serving the Hmong; it has provided better channels of communication with Hmong communities and has strengthened linkages among public and private agencies working with the Hmong.

Other problem-solving strategies that seem to work are based on building rapport between Hmong and host communities in various ways. Reducing tensions between Hmong and other ethnic groups, for example, has been facilitated in several cities by sponsoring "cultural fairs" in the schools and by other shared social events for children and adults, such as potlucks and picnics. Appointment of Hmong individuals to serve as liaisons with the police department has improved mutual understanding between police and the Hmong community. Similarly, developing even informal links between the judicial system and the Hmong communities, as has happened in Minnesota and California, has better coordinated Hmong and American ways of handling certain problems (especially family problems).

What Factors Account for the Effective Resettlement of the Hmong in Certain Communities? Which Resettlement Efforts Have Proved to Be the Most Promising?

Internal regulation. As noted above, there are major problems in trying to understand why Hmong resettlement is more "effective" or "successful" in some communities than in others. For example, the high rates of Hmong employment and economic self-sufficiency in the Dallas-Fort Worth area certainly suggest successful resettlement, but this has involved a small number of apparently carefully self-selected individuals able to find work in that particular labor market. By and large, the educational background of the Hmong in that area is much higher than that of the Hmong in other settled areas. Hmong in Portland, to take another example, became much more self-sufficient after the majority migrated to the Central Valley of California; those who stayed behind tended to be a self-selected group, relatively well adapted to the local economic environment. In both cases, then, the Hmong communities are adjusting successfully, but apparently only insofar as their numbers and capabilities match the supply of available jobs and other economic conditions. An important aspect of both situations is that effective economic adjustment depends on some internal controls within the Hmong community to regulate its size and composition in relation to prevailing economic realities.

Policies which encourage gradual transition from welfare dependence to economic self-sufficiency. One of the major challenges to Hmong household heads has been to maintain a secure "safety net" of income and medical care for their families while gradually obtaining the necessary

training and experience to participate in a competitive labor market. The difficulty of accomplishing a gradual transition from welfare dependence to economic self-sufficiency has depended on prevailing local economic conditions and the extent to which regulations in effect have encouraged or discouraged Hmong families on welfare to enter the labor market. Two major examples of how differences in regulations and eligibility over time or among states have influenced the economic adjustment of Hmong follow: (1) Where regulations in effect permit partial income supplementation to families on welfare, Hmong families have participated more heavily in the labor force through part-time employment (of either the primary or secondary earner) and in the process have gained work experience vital to finding full-time work at a later time. Many families in Orange County and other cities reportedly took advantage of this when they were eligible for refugee cash assistance, which allowed them to work part-time, but later stopped participating in the labor force when their eligibility changed. And (2) the situation in Providence, exceptional among resettlement sites in this regard, provides a continuing incentive for Hmong families on welfare to participate in the labor market through a work-force program that provides partial income supplementation to their public assistance benefits.

Clustered residential patterns. Another apparently important factor in the resettlement process is the opportunity for Hmong to live in clustered residential patterns. Families from a given lineage group not only enjoy living in the same locale, they often wish to be immediate neighbors or in close physical proximity. Such clustering, of course, has been a traditional feature of their lives and is largely bound up with many of their cultural practices. Sharing meals, child care,

watching out for one another, not feeling self-conscious about practicing traditional rituals and ceremonies--just feeling good about being Hmong in America and maintaining their ethnic identity--all of these facets of life are easier when closely related Hmong families live together. Possibilities for such clustering have varied widely among resettlement contexts. The happiness and overall adjustment of many families seems to have been closely linked to such living arrangements.

This is a double-edged sword, however. Many Hmong informants and resettlement workers feel that such clustered residence patterns tend to promote the social isolation of Hmong from their host communities, which, it is feared, may slow the overall adjustment process. Obviously there needs to be a balance here between cultural maintenance and acculturation/adjustment. Hmong themselves need to work out this balance and, in fact, exhibit their different preferences in the various resettlement sites into which they move. At one extreme, the Hmong in Dallas-Fort Worth have no such clustering at all, whereas those living in the large enclaves in California and Minnesota are heavily clustered.

How Many and What Kinds of Entrepreneurial Economic Development Projects Involving the Hmong Are Currently in Operation, e.g., Farming Projects, Pa Ndau Cooperatives? How Were They Developed and How Successful Are They?

Volume 2 of the Study's final reports is devoted to cataloging and analyzing in detail the numerous and diverse economic development projects that have been operated by Hmong. Over 82 projects, including grocery stores, restaurants, service businesses, farming projects and pa ndau sewing cooperatives are detailed. Twenty-two case studies are presented. Analyses of the costs and returns of these projects indicate that despite the Hmong's interest in such entrepreneurial activity, there

is no evidence that they are economically productive as primary sources of family income. The calculated rate of return on invested resources is not at all promising.

These results throw some sobering light on a commonly held belief:

MYTH: Economic development projects, particularly ones drawing on traditional crafts and skills such as pa ndau coops, are a viable means for Hmong economic self-sufficiency.

Some projects may nevertheless be worthwhile as secondary income sources for families, particularly if they utilize the labor of a homebound person who otherwise would not work, e.g., the pa ndau sewing of a person having child care responsibilities.

Projects may also be worthwhile for reasons other than immediate economic return. The many close friendships that have developed between Hmong and Americans collaborating in small businesses and projects most probably have facilitated overall resettlement and adjustment and are providing skills and knowledge to the Hmong participants that may well have long-term economic benefits. Other projects, such as the pa ndau coops, are appealing to Hmong (and non-Hmong) in part because they foster cultural preservation.

The very existence of some Hmong businesses and economic development instills feelings of pride, hope and self-determination throughout Hmong communities. Although such benefits may be intangible, many observers feel that they help maintain the Hmong's positive orientation towards their resettlement in the United States. Even if a small "extended family" grocery store, for example, fails to yield a reasonable economic

return, it may promote its members' feelings of hope for the future, of their ability to do something or try something for themselves. Further, such sharing of resources among a lineage group ties a familiar cultural practice to an economic activity in their new country.

What Kinds of Hmong Employment Strategies Have Been Particularly Successful?

Employment projects. In contrast with the economic development projects, cost benefit analysis indicates that resources invested in employment projects (i.e., efforts designed to place Hmong in existing jobs) exhibit an extremely high rate of return. Formal evaluation of only a few such efforts was undertaken, so the available evidence supports this as only a tentative conclusion and does not allow quantitative contrasts to be drawn among different types of employment projects. Effective approaches seem to be ones which have built closely on existing Hmong skills, have capitalized on the Hmong's reputation as dependable, hard-working employees, and have developed Hmong job-search skills. Both Hmong and non-Hmong persons familiar with the issues of stimulating Hmong employment feel that there are a number of promising strategies:

- o Placement of groups of Hmong with the same employer. If a relatively bilingual Hmong is initially hired, it has proved much easier to place other Hmong with that employer, even ones with poor English skills. Once an employer has the means (through a bilingual employee) of solving potential communication problems, the Hmong's reputation of being reliable and hard workers often tips the scale in their favor.
- o Planned secondary migration of Hmong to areas where they are highly employable. This holds some promise, but the very mixed set of outcomes reviewed in this Study indicates that it must be handled correctly to solve rather than create problems for the Hmong involved. Considerable attention must be paid to maintaining the integrity and proximity of family and important kin groupings, particularly if the migration is initiated or otherwise encouraged by outsiders.

- o Focusing on the array of existing skills and work preferences many Hmong adults bring to this country. Particularly important in this regard have been efforts to draw on the Hmong's penchant for agricultural work, metal and wood fabrication, and sewing.

MYTH: Most Hmong are totally unprepared to participate in the U.S. workforce--they have no useful work experience, skills or knowledge. Although most Hmong had little experience in an urban, industrialized economy prior to coming to the United States, many, in fact, have had experience and developed skills which can be drawn upon by employers. The ethic of working hard and paying careful attention to crops have turned Hmong into some of the most valued farmworkers in this country, even though traditional Hmong farming involved a very different technology than does modern agriculture. The self-sufficient Hmong lifestyle in Laos endowed many with excellent manual skills in working with wood and metal and sometimes mechanical skills for small engine repair. Many women have excellent sewing and fabric design skills. Further, probably both the hierarchical nature of Hmong society and the Hmong's extensive military experience under U.S. guidance have endowed most Hmong with attitudes highly valued by employers: They work well together and follow the instructions of established leaders.

How Might Current Strategies Be Changed to Result in More Effective Resettlement and Long-term Adjustment of the Hmong?

Fifteen years ago few could have predicted that 65,000 Hmong people from slash-and-burn farms in the mountains of Laos would be trying to make a new life in the ghettos of Providence or St. Paul, or in the suburbs of Dallas. Today it is equally difficult to say how the Hmong in the U.S. will be doing 15 years from now, or even where they will be. However, discussions with scores of Hmong around the country during the course of this Study have provided a picture of how the Hmong have been

faring as they attempt to resettle here, and numerous ideas of ways to improve or facilitate the resettlement process have been suggested, by the Hmong themselves as well as by resettlement workers, officials and others working with the Hmong. Some of these ideas are being actively considered or are on their way to implementation, others remain to be examined critically. The most promising and most pressing of these suggestions are presented here as recommendations of this Study. A final section describes the goals the many Hmong who participated in this Study expressed for themselves.

How Might Resettlement Be Conducted Differently for the Hmong? What New Approaches Are Being Considered by Those Involved in Hmong Resettlement? How Would the Hmong Want Resettlement to Be Done Differently?

Provision of services for the Hmong. Service providers, teachers and others who have been working with the Hmong over the years of their resettlement in this country have often expended enormous energy and good will in their efforts to ease the adjustment of the Hmong to life here. Hmong everywhere gratefully acknowledge such help. However, some general suggestions for improvement emerged from the hundreds of discussions and interviews and meetings with Hmong and Americans involved in the resettlement process, contrasting good with bad experiences and exploring alternative strategies. If certain aspects of Hmong social structure, values and past experience are not taken into consideration when planning for and dealing with the Hmong, no matter how well organized and funded a program is, it is likely to fail to provide adequate and appropriate services. These suggestions relate to interactions between Hmong and Americans in general, no matter the area of service or interest --economic, educational, or social.

As described in this Study, Hmong social structure is based on the extended family and lineage group. The functioning unit is not limited to the nuclear family, as it is for most Americans. Hmong married sons have traditionally brought their brides home to live under the same roof or in close proximity to the sons' parents and male siblings. In some Hmong families have not continued this pattern in their new homes in the United States, it is mainly due to resettlement policies which have placed close relatives in distant cities or to the limitations of available housing. To understand the motivations and actions of the Hmong and to meet their needs more adequately, individuals and agencies working with Hmong clientele should revise their thinking regarding the social unit targeted for assistance.

RECOMMENDATION: Social units larger than the individual or nuclear family must be considered when providing services to the Hmong. Such units include the extended family and lineage group.

Agencies and programs designed to help the Hmong need to be more aware of the many levels of leadership active in Hmong communities and draw upon their expertise and influence more effectively. Too often the types of leadership most visible to outsiders are not the ones with greatest influence on significant decisions regarding such matters as employment objectives and secondary migration.

Various types of leadership are discussed in this report--lineage group leaders, military leaders, youth group and MAA leaders. Leaders most visible outside of the Hmong community--such as the nationally prominent ex-military leaders and the young bilingual leaders found in MAAs--are not the only leaders who have an impact on major decisions.

Lineage group leaders, rarely visible to outsiders, play key roles in making decisions such as which economic opportunities their groups will pursue or where they will live. These leaders, too, need to be acknowledged, considered and consulted when issues arise and when programs are being planned.

RECOMMENDATION: The several types and levels of Hmong leadership must be recognized and consulted when programs and services are planned and implemented.

Americans involved in the resettlement of the Hmong in this country need to increase their understanding of Hmong values and culture and of the ways the Hmong view conditions here in the United States. Open dialogs between Hmong and Americans need to occur about the alternatives available to the Hmong. Discussions need to take place about the goals Hmong have for themselves (see below)--in particular, about the possibility (real or visionary) of returning to Laos versus the possibilities for effective adjustment to life here. Care must be taken because Hmong are naturally reluctant to discuss this with people they do not know well, since they do not wish to appear ungrateful to the United States.

RECOMMENDATION: Americans working to help the Hmong adjust and resettle here should strive to increase their understanding of Hmong cultural values, opinions and goals and always take these into consideration in any effort to serve the Hmong.

A related concern involves the experiences of both the Hmong and Americans during the Vietnam War. Both Hmong and Americans need to be much more conscious of the sensitivities each has regarding the war in

Southeast Asia and the role of the Hmong in the secret war in Laos in particular. Many service providers and teachers who were philosophically opposed to the war 15-20 years ago now find themselves trying to help individuals resettle who are here because of their active involvement in that war and their powerful anti-communist sentiments.

RECOMMENDATION: Hmong and Americans should gain greater awareness of the sensitivities each has about the War and, in particular, expectations regarding unfulfilled moral and political promises.

Placement policy. The initial placement policy and process for Hmong refugees has been very problematic. When close relatives (according to the Hmong kinship system) have not been settled in geographical proximity, the individual Hmong families have faced additional adjustment problems, and much costly secondary migration has resulted. The reception and placement process which considers only the nuclear family as the primary social unit to be kept intact should be redrawn for Hmong; larger units, particularly the lineage group, wish to live together--at least in the same city.

RECOMMENDATION: Family groups who have traditionally lived together should be placed together.

Secondary migration. By whatever process the initial placements are carried out, subsequent geographical redistribution of Hmong is likely to take place--if past experience is any guide--in response to both external factors (e.g., changes in local economic conditions) and internal pressures within Hmong communities (e.g., desires to try living in new environments). For policy-makers and service providers attempting to

ease the adjustment of the Hmong to life here, the massive Hmong migrations sometimes based on limited information or rumor may seem counterproductive. From a perspective of considerable knowledge about the socioeconomic conditions and services available in a variety of resettlement sites, such moves sometimes seem only to make the resettlement context worse for the Hmong. However, great care should be exercised to resist well-meaning attempts to influence or control the migration of the Hmong from one area to another. Although many problems have been associated with secondary migration, it has had positive results as well. It is a vital process.

RECOMMENDATION: Secondary migration should not be arbitrarily discouraged in Hmong resettlement.

Several ideas regarding secondary migration are being actively considered by resettlement agencies:

- o planned secondary migration projects designed to encourage groups of Hmong families to move to areas offering them improved economic prospects;
- o targeted assistance projects to local Hmong communities to facilitate local resettlement efforts and retention of families otherwise likely to move to less economically favorable areas; and
- o prioritizing the initial placement of Hmong in "favorable alternative sites," i.e., areas offering excellent chances of rapid employment and short-term self-sufficiency.

However, policies or procedures which focus narrowly on only immediate employment prospects in an area but fail to consider the availability of educational and social services needed to facilitate long-term adjustment have also been problematic; there are numerous cases in which individual families secured employment for the first few years of their

resettlement, but had limited or no access to ESL or vocational training during that time and later wound up, when economic conditions changed, without jobs or the skills and knowledge to find work.

RECOMMENDATION: Resettlement policy-makers and service providers must supply the Hmong with solid information about economic and social conditions in numerous areas around the country so that the Hmong may make informed choices about where to live and the types of endeavors in which to invest their energies.

The difficulties experienced thus far with both initial placements and secondary migration indicate how sensitive these issues are to the Hmong and how carefully they must be planned and implemented in order to work effectively. Of concern is not only the potential self-sufficiency of the Hmong and thus the cost and overall effectiveness of their resettlement as refugees in the United States, but also one of this country's most precious freedoms--the right to live wherever one wishes (and the right to move in pursuit of greater happiness). Such rights have long been prerogatives of Hmong life. However well-intentioned prospective migration-related policies may be, their chances of working effectively will be vastly increased if they are conceived and implemented with great respect for and consultation with Hmong desires and decision-making processes.

RECOMMENDATION: The conception and implementation of resettlement policies which attempt to influence secondary migration should be based on cooperation and consultation with appropriate levels of Hmong leadership to include Hmong interests and decision-making processes.

Economic adjustment. Hmong leaders suggested several ways that the economic adjustment of the Hmong in this country might be improved. The resettlement process must be planned and implemented realistically to provide for a gradual transition from economic dependence to self-sufficiency. Too many families are expected, as it were, to make a sudden transition from a state of welfare dependence--which imposes strong disincentives to the gradual acquisition of work experience and job skills--to a state of economic self-sufficiency--which often demands those very skills and experiences. Innovative income and medical benefit supplementation programs, such as those in Rhode Island, are particularly useful in helping people leave dependence behind.

Although Hmong leaders realize that the welfare system imposes such disincentives on many people besides the Hmong, they feel several approaches to resettlement could be tried to ameliorate the problems posed by the welfare system:

- o either change overall welfare regulations or establish special regulations for needy refugee families that permit a reasonable period for part-time employment and training experience during which cash and medical assistance are available;
- o liberalize public assistance regulations to permit rather than discourage attempts to attain self-sufficiency through self-employed farming (present regulations render a family ineligible for cash or medical assistance if the primary earner works on his or her own farm even though the time lag between the actual farming effort and receipt of income from the first crop is too great to permit the family to subsist without some assistance); and
- o provide a lump sum benefit for Hmong refugees, aggregating the benefits they might otherwise accrue (except for an emergency reserve amount) into a fund that could be used to establish farms, obtain specialized training or provide capital for other eligible activities.

Although the net costs of providing benefits in these ways might be no higher, such ideas could well be politically impractical for a number of reasons. Nevertheless, whenever Hmong leaders react to estimates of cumulative welfare costs for the Hmong, they remark that those funds could have been much more productively diverted towards attaining self-sufficiency in other ways. Rather than stimulating self-sufficiency through more enlightened use of public monies, many Hmong feel that welfare costs are directed towards "keeping people poor." Current policies in most states are viewed as setting people up for failure and continued dependence, rather than as truly "assisting" them during what one would hope is a temporary time of hardship.

RECOMMENDATION: Innovative policies need to be developed which support gradual transitions from welfare dependence to economic self-sufficiency.

Coupled with changes in public assistance policies which will facilitate the transition from welfare dependence to work, the Hmong need more effective job training and placement programs. As this Study found, the long-range economic adjustment of the Hmong in the United States is going to require much higher levels of employment. To become economically self-sufficient, most families will need multiple sources of income or multiple wage earners. Improved access to the labor market through effective job training and good employment programs is critical for promoting Hmong self-sufficiency.

RECOMMENDATION: Job training and employment placement programs must be developed which build on Hmong skills, prepare Hmong for jobs for which there is a demand, and provide for placement and follow-up in such jobs.

Although economic development projects and private enterprises may not be as promising for the economic self-sufficiency of the Hmong as many would like to believe, the development of farming, small businesses and cottage industries still represents a viable source of income for some Hmong. As discussed more fully in Volume 2, there is a clear need for technical assistance and development capital for these ventures. Numerous efforts are already underway, but the need for outside expertise and assistance is great.

RECOMMENDATION: More technical assistance and development capital should be made available for Hmong private economic ventures.

Provision of English language training. This research and other studies as well have clearly shown that for Hmong adults--particularly individuals with little or no previous education or literacy skills (the majority of the Hmong)--acquisition of English is a slow process. Limitation of ESL provision (to 6 months, for example) reflects unrealistic assumptions about the rate of English acquisition and ignores individual differences as well. In all communities studied, people requested more English training.

A major finding is that most employed individuals are not learning English on the job. If people's skills in English are low when they enter a job, in all likelihood they have found a job which requires little or no English and which offers few opportunities for using English. To advance on the job or be able to find future employment, these working adults need continued English language training.

RECOMMENDATION: The eligibility of Hmong adults to participate in English language training should not be arbitrarily limited in duration.

The Study results also indicate that adult ESL training should be based more on the practical language uses and needs of the Hmong. In particular, job-related English should be a major focus. Similarly, Hmong adult students of ESL need greater opportunities to use English in social situations outside the classroom. Language instruction should be approached in terms of Hmong social networks and interactions with native English speakers. This is particularly important for the many Hmong who live in large enclaves and have virtually no contact with native English speakers.

RECOMMENDATION: ESL Training should focus on practical, real-world applications of the language, especially job-related English. Innovative programs need to be devised that will encourage contacts between Hmong and non-Hmong.

In many of the communities studied here, Hmong adults have been placed in classes designed for other ethnic groups; often such classes do not meet the specific needs of Hmong students. Increased use of bilingual aides is needed, particularly to provide indepth orientation for previously unschooled adults regarding the process of education, what is expected of them--as well as what is expected of their children, so that they may be more supportive and encouraging regarding their children's education. Bilingual aides should also provide information about social and economic issues of concern to these adult students.

RECOMMENDATION: Whenever possible, ESL training for Hmong should be designed and presented in ways that address Hmong-specific needs.

Structural barriers such as convenient class hours and locations and provision of child care and transportation when appropriate are serious concerns for many of the Hmong who most need to improve their English. Included in this group are home-bound women and individuals who work and have difficulty fitting English class into their already demanding schedules of work and child care.

RECOMMENDATION: Provision of English language instruction for Hmong adults should consider structural barriers to their participation and attempt to accommodate work schedules and child care needs in particular.

Education of Hmong children. The future of the Hmong in this country will largely depend on the successful education of their children. This is a heavy responsibility for both the school children and their parents and one that Hmong youth do not take lightly. Every effort should be made to facilitate their schooling.

Given the high birth rate of the Hmong and the tendency of the Hmong to reside in large enclaves in which little English is spoken, elementary school educators in communities with large Hmong populations must anticipate the continued influx into kindergarten and first grade of large numbers of Hmong children who do not speak English. For these young children just entering the school system, relatively short-term bilingual and/or ESL classes can ease their adjustment to school and promote their rapid acquisition of English.

RECOMMENDATION: Elementary school educators should anticipate the need and provide bilingual and/or ESL classes for newly enrolled monolingual Hmong speakers.

Although most students in the middle grades and high school seem satisfied with the ESL training they are receiving, criticisms by teachers and students point out the need for individualized policies regarding the amount and nature of the training. Some students want less initial emphasis on written English and preparation for mandated graduation competencies until their oral skills develop appropriately. Others who speak English fluently report having considerable difficulty with writing; they stress the need for special writing instruction (even after they have left ESL programs) to prepare them to go on to college.

RECOMMENDATION: ESL instruction should be sensitive to the abilities and goals of each student, particularly to the practical uses they wish to make of the language.

Students who do not plan to continue their formal education beyond high school need more opportunities for learning about the world of work and for developing specific skills which will help them find jobs and keep them. Knowledge of the types of employment available in this society, the qualifications for particular jobs, the job-search process, as well as appropriate behavior on the job, are all areas about which students need more information.

RECOMMENDATION: More opportunities for vocational training should be offered Hmong students, particularly those not pursuing a college education.

Even college-bound, bright optimistic young people are often unclear about their options. Hmong youth across the country expressed the need for improved counseling and orientation about career and educational options. Hmong youth in small communities, whose schools do not have

bilingual counselors, have a particular need. College students are concerned that lack of future orientation and lack of knowledge about how to plan their lives prevent many Hmong youth from succeeding in school and at work.

RECOMMENDATION: Improved vocational and educational counseling needs to be provided for Hmong youth

Special efforts need to be focused on the plight of many Hmong adolescents and young adults who are forced to drop out of school for lack of financial support. There are several different types of support which could be offered, including (1) scholarship funds for college students; (2) continued public assistance for high school students who are trying to complete their education; and (3) support for the numerous Hmong student associations that have developed and already attempt to counsel students on financial matters and educational options.

RECOMMENDATION: Programs need to be designed to provide financial support for Hmong youth to complete high school.

How can the Hmong Be Resettled in a Way That Better Utilizes Their Strengths and Unique Characteristics?

The Hmong have a number of strengths and characteristics that could be better utilized for more effective resettlement: (1) their cohesive social structure which gives them abilities to work closely together and share resources to achieve common goals; (2) their internal leadership and decision-making processes; and (3) their orientation towards independence and self-sufficiency.

Resettlement workers are always struck by the cohesiveness of Hmong extended families and lineage groups. Even when living on meager incomes, Hmong readily pool their resources to buy cars, start farms and other businesses, bring relatives over from Thailand, and move across the country. Within Hmong lineage groups, such sharing is natural and has been going on for centuries, as have practices of pooling labor to achieve common goals (e.g., building homes).

RECOMMENDATION:

Programs should be developed that take advantage of the Hmong's group orientation and enhanced collective capabilities.

Perhaps loan or matching grant programs (or even some form of the aggregated public assistance alternative mentioned above) could be made available to qualified groups for endeavors such as land purchase, farm development, reciprocal labor to build homes, or other projects in which Hmong have repeatedly expressed interest. Many such activities are not feasible if the individual family is taken as the unit of resettlement. Once again, as determined regarding placement and migration activities, it is critical to deal with not only the nuclear and extended family but also larger Hmong kin groups. If such an approach is adopted, it is equally critical that the appropriate social groups be used. Attempts to establish dues-paying or resource-sharing arrangements across traditional kin groups have met with major problems in several cities. Hmong patterns of trust and cooperation should be respected.

To implement group-oriented programs, resettlement workers must become familiar with the varied forms of Hmong leadership and decision-making described in this report. The "leaders" most visible and

accessible outside the Hmong community naturally tend to be younger, more bilingual and bicultural individuals. Although they are easy for resettlement agencies to work with, other levels of leadership must be understood and involved in the types of decisions called for here.

The Hmong place an extremely high value on living according to their own sense of freedom and self-determination. Economic self-sufficiency was always a part of their life prior to becoming refugees. They still long for such independence in this country, even though most realize it must be attained in a very different way. Nevertheless, Hmong are willing to work extremely hard to progress economically and, when they do have jobs that can support their families, rarely fail to impress employers with their hard and dedicated work.

The Hmong also place great value on their children's education, even though many parents have never been to school and do not know how to help and support their children with their schooling. Nevertheless, the children are clearly the links between education and the future self-sufficiency, independence and well-being of the Hmong in America and the Hmong recognize this. Both parents and children will benefit from efforts to include the parents more in monitoring the educational progress of their children.

What Do the Hmong Want for Themselves? What Do Hmong View as Essential for Effective Resettlement? What Are Their Goals for the Future? For the Next Generation of Hmong?

Fundamental concerns underlying successful resettlement. As noted above the Hmong have strong desires to control their own destinies in this country, as they have always done in Southeast Asia. This translates into a number of fundamental concerns. Most Hmong wish to

live together in their traditional kin groups--this does not mean, however, that all Hmong wish to live in the same city. Hmong who adhere to traditional religious beliefs need the physical freedom to live in an environment in which they can practice their rituals without undue interference from their neighbors. Like all peoples, Hmong wish to live without excessive fear and vulnerability to crime, discrimination and prejudice. Hmong wish to maintain a sense of their heritage and ethnic identity. For many, this desire manifests itself as dreams if not expectations of returning to the ancestral home and lifestyle of Laos. For many other Hmong--indeed, for countless other immigrants before them--dreams of returning home are only a metaphor for cultural maintenance and the vision of someday having the freedom to return home; they are nevertheless committed to a future here.

Hmong goals for the future. The implications of this Study for the future of the Hmong should and must be determined to a large extent by what the Hmong envision for themselves. Thus it is fitting to conclude with a summary of Hmong goals for the future. The dream of returning to Laos is discussed first, followed by the goals of individuals attempting to shape their future here.

1. The dream of returning to Laos. Some Hmong cannot consider any future in this country. Many of the elderly, some women who are heads of households, and some others have lost hope concerning their ability to succeed here. They long for a return to their former life in Laos--a different land and a different time.

The elderly and other individuals with little faith in the present, let alone the future, in the U.S. are not the only people who think about returning to Laos. Most Hmong would like to go back if they could return

to the way their lives were before the war tore them from their homes and villages. Many, however, also realize that that time may never come again. Feelings about returning to Laos range from a desire to stay here because at least the children will get an opportunity, to an intense desire to go back and resume fighting. Some men have expressed outright the willingness to follow General Vang Pao back to Laos and fight to retake the country from the communists. Others comment they never planned to stay in the United States permanently, rather they came to get away from the war for a while and get some training, then return to Laos when the situation stabilizes. The majority of those who would like to go back would return only if the communists left and there was no more war. Most Hmong are tired of war.

Although this desire to return to Laos seems very strong and very widespread (for example, 86% of the population surveyed in the Twin Cities), a much smaller number think of it as a realistic possibility. Nostalgia for the homeland and the old life are felt, of course, by most immigrants. How much does this desire to return home affect the motivation of the Hmong to adapt to life in the U.S.? Does this cherished dream help people through the hard times here or merely serve as an added barrier to their successful adjustment?

High school students in Orange County, themselves bright and optimistic, explained their parents' dream of returning to Laos: "Because they have no education and they just stay home, that's the reason they want to go back to Laos. Every which way is blank for them so that's the only dream."

Several Hmong commented that one reason life was better back in Laos was because individuals experienced more freedom there. In Laos, before

the war and the communist victory, there was a different kind of freedom: a freedom to live however one liked without government intervention. Hmong complain there are too many rules and regulations here. One is always dependent on someone else to stay alive, and it is hard to continue life in the Hmong way. In Laos, the Hmong could settle and till the land in the mountains; through hard work they had control over their destinies and government was far away. People could live the Hmong way without intervention. They could grow food, build a house or move almost anywhere they liked. In the U.S., as an impoverished population, the Hmong experience severe restrictions on their way of life.

Some people have suffered a growing disillusionment with life in the United States. One man, who arrived in 1976, said that when he first arrived he was very excited about being in the United States. He felt this was where he could build a new life and forget about Laos. He had this attitude for about a year, but then he slowly became disillusioned. This man has done well materially, he speaks English and has a good job, but the longer he lives here the more uncomfortable he feels. Now he feels as if he is in jail. Others, particularly the young people who can no longer remember their lives in Laos, have little interest in returning and, in fact, if they ever did return would be likely to suffer culture shock there. As a student in Orange County noted:

I think the younger kids are really just about the same like the American kids; they don't remember that much about Laos. They want to be the same as American kids. They feel like they need to belong and not feel separate.

Although General Vang Pao has continued to talk about a possible return to Laos, he emphasizes the fact that the welfare of the Hmong in the United States takes priority at the present time (interview with Vang Pao in St. Paul, December, 1982). In a speech given in Hmong to the

Hmong in the Twin Cities in 1981, General Vang Pao admonished them to take any job that is offered, to be assertive in seeking jobs, to establish businesses to serve their own community, and to work toward becoming American citizens.

2. Hmong goals for life in the United States. When Hmong people in the Twin Cities were asked about their plans for the future, very few had a well-developed sense of how they would like to live. Although they may worry about funding cuts or getting a job, most seem to have difficulty envisioning specifically how they would like to have their life proceed in this country. Out of their traditional environment, aspiring to a new and different life and planning for multiple adjustments is a novel problem for many Hmong. It is difficult to conceive of life 5 years or 10 years from now when the possibilities are unknown. Lack of information about the options available makes setting specific goals and making plans to achieve them nearly impossible.

Most Hmong would agree that their overriding goal here is to achieve self-sufficiency. Despite problems of discrimination, poor health, crowded housing, not to mention the great personal losses they have suffered in the course of war and exile from their homeland, the main concern of most Hmong--and it is of great concern to them--is to have the possibility of working to earn enough to meet their basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, transportation and medical care. Where people differ is in describing the best way to reach that goal. The means to the goal depend on how individuals view their own backgrounds and capabilities as well as what they know about the economic environment in which they live. For some the most pressing need is to get a job that will provide an adequate and reliable source of income to support their families.

Others, who may be less certain about the job market or their present level of English and job skills, feel that the only way to reach the goal of having a job is by first improving their English skills and by getting job training. Many in other communities would agree with the Hmong in the Twin Cities who feel that additional monetary assistance is needed while they obtain necessary training if they are to succeed in their goal of becoming "good," productive, and self-reliant citizens.

The goals of many of the more educated Hmong, who for the most part already have adequate incomes, seem centered around the possibilities of owning their own businesses, which could provide employment for other Hmong. As noted, numerous businesses already exist around the country, ranging from small grocery stores (the most popular type of business thus far) to a security guard agency.

The goals of successful high school and college students also go beyond self-sufficiency. These young people are thinking in terms of American-style "careers" and of leadership roles in their communities. Some want to be lawyers or doctors, others (as in Dallas-Fort Worth) plan to be engineers and take advantage of the high-tech opportunities where they live. Some are studying business management. Most of these students are strongly committed to using their skills to help their communities any way they can. They would like Hmong to be the ones responsible for the upcoming generation of Hmong, rather than continuing to leave so much problem-solving in the hands of others. The Hmong student organizations that exist in Dallas-Fort Worth, Orange County, Fresno, the Twin Cities and elsewhere exemplify the willingness of Hmong youth to play a determining role in the future development of their communities. On the whole, they take their responsibilities to their

families and the Hmong community very seriously, volunteering or working extra hours, often at considerable personal hardship, while they study to reach their goals.

These young people aspire to have the freedom to be able to pursue their individual educations, careers and other goals while still participating fully in the cycle of Hmong life. They need the support and assistance of both the Hmong community and resettlement programs, for they truly are the future of the Hmong.

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APPENDIX 1

Brief Case Study Site Descriptions

Selection of Case Study Sites

In choosing community case study sites, both logistical and substantive criteria were considered. Logistically, communities in which the research staff could work efficiently through a combination of previous knowledge, contacts and existing sources of information were strongly preferred. Substantively, a good mix of resettlement site characteristics was needed to illustrate some of the significant factors underlying Hmong resettlement in the United States. Substantive criteria considered were:

- o Geographic and demographic representativeness. The mix of sites was selected to contain a large proportion of the Hmong population in the U.S. and include Hmong communities in most regions of the U.S. where the Hmong have resettled in large numbers.
- o Size and impact. The sites represent larger Hmong settlements as well as smaller communities which demonstrate contrasting approaches to resettlement.
- o Urban vs. rural setting. Because of the considerable discussion of how a historically rural, agrarian people such as the Hmong may adjust to urban life, both urban and more rural settings were selected for case studies.
- o Economic context. Varying economic conditions among resettlement locales affect not only the opportunities for attaining employment and economic self-sufficiency, but may also affect expectations about work and outsiders' attitudes toward the Hmong. Sites chosen therefore represent different economic bases and varying levels and types of employment and economic development opportunities.
- o Secondary migration. Secondary migration between communities has been an important characteristic of Hmong resettlement in the United States. The variety of improvement and reunification motives involved in secondary migration potentially has a major effect on the character of new communities formed and old communities left behind. The sites chosen include areas which have been magnets for secondary migration, those which have been relatively stable in population, and areas which have experienced losses of population due to migration to other areas.

The communities in which case studies were conducted, selected based on the criteria above, are:

1. Minneapolis-St. Paul (the Twin Cities), Minnesota
2. Orange County, California
3. Providence, Rhode Island
4. Portland, Oregon
5. Fort Smith, Arkansas
6. Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas
7. Fresno, California

Brief descriptions of each case study site are presented here to introduce the reader to the seven communities studied in depth. The results of each case study have been compiled as separate documents which are available upon request from the Office of Refugee Resettlement or the Refugee Materials Center (see the Preface for details). Further information regarding the methodology used in conducting the fieldwork for these case studies can be found in the Preface to this report and in the individual site reports.

Minneapolis-St. Paul (the Twin Cities), Minnesota

The Hmong population in the Minneapolis-St. Paul areas was estimated at 10,000 in the spring of 1983. The first Hmong families arrived in 1976, and the population grew slowly during the first 2 years. By 1978 it had tripled, and by 1980 the Twin Cities had become the largest urban concentration of Hmong in the United States. The Hmong population there peaked in 1981. Both direct sponsorship and secondary migration contributed to the rapid growth. In 1982, 60% of the Hmong said that they originally lived outside the Twin Cities, and 40% were settled there originally. Factors cited in the heavy secondary migration to Minnesota include initial placement of a few influential group leaders, good ESL and vocational training, adequate welfare, favorable community

receptiveness and family reunification. Since 1981, about 2,000 Hmong have left the Twin Cities for California.

The Minneapolis-St. Paul Hmong community was chosen for study because until the recent growth of Fresno it had been the largest urban concentration of Hmong since their resettlement in this country. From 1978-81 it was a major magnet for secondary migration. One thing that stands out about Hmong resettlement in the Twin Cities is that the Hmong are the primary refugee group in the region and have been since 1979. Most refugee programs there, including employment programs, ESL programs, farming projects, and training programs, have been developed with the special problems of Hmong in mind. The attention Hmong receive in the Twin Cities continues to make the area an attractive place for Hmong to stay, even when there is little else to keep them there.

The Twin Cities Hmong community is large and diverse. There are some individuals and families who are doing well, have good jobs and important roles in the community. There are many students in college who show ambition and leadership potential and there are many more students in school who are learning English and becoming more and more like American youth. The community is well organized and has strong mutual assistance associations and organizations of youth and women working for betterment of the Hmong. Particularly noteworthy in the Twin Cities is the interest shown by Americans, including private companies and foundations, to help the Hmong; there are large and small development projects throughout the area.

Still, the majority of Hmong in the Twin Cities are not faring so well. Unemployment and welfare dependence are high. Approximately 20% of Hmong adults there are currently employed. There are not many jobs

available for unskilled workers. Inadequate English language skills are seen as a major and pervasive problem among the Twin Cities Hmong. A fairly good command of English is required to be trained and hired for jobs above minimum wage, which are needed to support large families. Hmong are concerned that the duration and intensity of ESL training is inadequate to meet their needs and not sufficiently tied to job training.

Hmong in Minneapolis-St. Paul face a second major problem: The low-paid jobs for which most qualify do not provide enough income to meet the needs of a large family. Quite often a family is already receiving more through public cash assistance than can be earned through a job. In general the mood in the Hmong community is one of frustration and depression. Hope is thin, and many Hmong appear to be resigned to being dependent and dreaming of returning to Laos.

Orange County, California

Orange County is one of the older Hmong communities in the United States. By January 1977, before the major waves of Hmong entered the U.S., there were already approximately 1,200 Hmong living in the County. From 1976 to 1981, the Hmong population grew steadily, reaching a peak of about 6,500 in 1981. Many Hmong settled in Orange County directly from the camps in Thailand. However, Orange County also became a magnet for secondary migration principally because of its good economy, but also because of the mild climate and educational opportunities.

Orange County was chosen as a site for study because it was the oldest and largest Hmong settlement in California, in addition to being the center of several Hmong leadership activities. One way Orange County stands out among the sites studied is the dramatic change that has taken

place in the "self-sufficiency" of Hmong there. Until the economic recession, jobs were plentiful, and many Hmong moved there in hopes of economic betterment. In 1981, most families had someone working, and the community was hopeful.

In 1981 and early 1982, self-sufficiency for the Hmong became more problematic. The economy declined at about the same time as cash and other types of refugee assistance became more limited in Orange County, and the cost of living, particularly rents, rose sharply. In 1981 approximately 60% of the Hmong were working there; now less than 30% are working. The majority of families receives some form of public assistance, which barely covers basic expenses. People who have been laid off find it difficult to get another job. With high rents, low wages and looming lay-offs, there is a growing feeling of hopelessness and despair of succeeding in Orange County. Since 1981 approximately half of the Hmong have left Orange County; there are currently about 3,000 individuals residing there. Most of the Hmong who have left have gone to the Central Valley of California, some to Texas and Arkansas.

The Hmong in Orange County have not been able to make optimum use of refugee programs in this highly refugee-impacted area because most are designed for Vietnamese, who comprise over 80% of the more than 40,000 refugees there. Some Hmong services have been offered through Lao Family Community (a strong mutual assistance organization established by the Hmong in 1977), but these services have been seriously curtailed due to funding cuts.

Though the high school dropout rate remains high, over 20 young people in Orange County have been able to take advantage of the numerous inexpensive state colleges and universities in the area. These young

people have contributed their help in educating the older residents on aspects of American life and tutoring and counseling high school students. But some of the best and brightest of these have recently moved to Fresno, too.

Providence, Rhode Island

The Hmong who came directly from the camps in Thailand to Providence were sponsored by two agencies, the International Institute and Catholic Social Service. The "congregational model" of resettlement, where individual church groups or families sponsor one or more refugee families, was not used in the state of Rhode Island. By chance a few key leaders were settled in Providence in 1976; eventually other Hmong moved there from other parts of the country, and by 1982 42% of the Hmong in Providence were secondary migrants. Until 1982 in-migration of Hmong from other states exceeded out-migration. In 1982 the pattern reversed, when Hmong began to leave Providence for the Central Valley of California. In 1983 Hmong in- and out-migration appeared to be equalizing each other.

The Hmong community of Providence--approximately 2,500 individuals--has several unique features. In spite of a chronically high general unemployment rate, Hmong employment there is relatively high and public assistance rates are lower than in other large Hmong communities. Because of the type of companies found in Rhode Island, the Hmong have found many jobs. About 70% of Hmong adults are working, mainly in entry-level jobs in the jewelry, metal, wire, and plastics industries. Many of these jobs provide health insurance. Housing is relatively inexpensive; about 20 families own their homes and the number is expected to grow.

General public assistance is available for eligible families and single people. Also, welfare supplementation is available for individuals working minimum wage jobs whose wages do not meet general assistance levels, and unemployed parents may qualify for Workfare and work 40 hours a week for the city to receive GPA benefits plus \$40 per week.

The Hmong community is visible in Providence and has received funding from the state refugee coordinator's office. In this city long accustomed to immigrants and refugees, many programs have been designed specifically for Hmong needs, including provision for a large number of bilingual aides in the schools and in social service and health facilities. The Hmong in Providence have organized a strong mutual assistance association which has received grants and contracts from the government to undertake a garden project for 315 families; an evening ESL school; an orientation project; daycare training; and job development and health coordination. The Hmong are experiencing a growing reception to their presence in the workforce. Still, the lack of English makes it difficult to get high-paying jobs, and the long distance between Providence and other large Hmong communities makes moving a constant temptation. Crime is the chief complaint of the Hmong in Providence. A strict pattern of housing segregation has tied the Hmong to high-crime neighborhoods. These same neighborhoods are multi-ethnic and little has been done to date to foster community understanding between the different ethnic groups.

Portland, Oregon

The Portland Hmong community was selected for study because it was previously one of the largest Hmong communities in the U.S.

(approximately 4,500) and subsequently lost three-quarters of its population to the Central Valley of California. The community grew steadily from 1975 through 1981. Many early arriving Hmong sponsored relatives from the camps in Thailand and families moved from other states to be with their relatives in Oregon. In 1981, 29% of the population had migrated to Portland from another state. The Portland Hmong community experienced a drastic reduction in size that began in the fall of 1981 and continued throughout 1982 as Hmong began a mass migration out of the state to the Central Valley of California. The out-migration has slowed, and the Portland Hmong community now appears to be stabilizing. The Hmong population in Portland now numbers about 140 households comprised of 1,050 individuals. The Hmong population currently grows slightly in the summer as a unknown number of Hmong (from 75 to several hundred) migrate north from California to pick berries and then return to California.

The massive out-migration which occurred in late 1981 and early 1982 was caused by a number of factors including: (1) the pull to reunite with family members in California, (2) the impending change in federal refugee assistance which would leave many families in Oregon without any form of public assistance, since Oregon had no aid for childless couples or families with both parents unemployed, (3) the worsening economy and shrinking labor market, and (4) the feeling of some traditional leaders that they were not being consulted by resettlement agencies making decisions which might affect the future of their groups in Portland.

The Hmong families remaining in Portland seem to have formed a stable, viable community. A concerted effort has been made to overcome factionalism and to present Hmong views in a unified way to the American

community. In the medium-sized Hmong community remaining there is a strong desire for self-sufficiency; most want to remain off welfare. Some individuals have chosen to remain in Portland--mainly to retain jobs--even though their relatives are in California, in spite of the decline in Portland's economy and labor market. Most families have at least one person working and almost half of the households have two people working, even though Hmong in Portland have not benefited from local employment service programs as much as other groups. Most people who are working have minimum wage jobs in agricultural work such as nurseries or in manufacturing. A few Hmong have skilled jobs as machinists and tool and die makers and earn up to \$11 an hour. There is also an opportunity to earn money harvesting berries in summer months. Life is not easy, but families pool resources and help each other find work.

Many members of the Portland community expressed the view that because the Hmong community is now smaller, opportunities have increased for those who stayed to learn English, get jobs, and become leaders. In many ways, the massive migration out of Portland seems to have created a more favorable environment for those who stayed. Concern over the education of their children also kept many families in Portland who felt that opportunities to learn English would decrease in a larger Hmong settlement. In addition, children in Portland high schools could continue to study until a later age than in California.

Fort Smith, Arkansas*

The Hmong community of Fort Smith is unique because it exists entirely as the result of planned secondary migration. Although community members have come from several different locations (primarily Santa Ana, California, Salt Lake City, Utah, and Kansas City, Missouri), they are highly unified. Nearly all are related by blood or marriage, share the same Blue Hmong dialect and the same Christian faith, and come from the same region in Laos. They moved with a purpose: to support themselves through jobs, their own businesses, their own farms. They thought Arkansas might afford them their dream of a self-sufficient, rural life.

In November 1979, with the help of an American friend, the first two Hmong families moved to Fort Smith from Santa Ana, California. They hoped to build houses and start farms and businesses of their own. Now there are 55 Hmong families (298 individuals) in the area. When they arrived in Fort Smith some Hmong families bought 13 acres of farm land and leased other land to raise cows. Nearly all of them got jobs and they now have their own store. None of the Hmong in Fort Smith is on welfare. However, poor economic conditions and job discrimination have meant that the people who work do not earn enough to support their large families. Most of their jobs are in low-paying poultry processing plants where working conditions are bad; most do not have any health insurance to cover the high cost of health care. They cannot find better jobs and they do not have enough money to pursue their business plans.

*Shortly after the fieldwork for this Study was completed, the Hmong in Fort Smith began to move. Approximately half moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where they obtained much better paying jobs than they had had before; others moved to Wisconsin or to California.

The Hmong here have job skills that are not being utilized and plans for economic development, but they are socially and politically isolated from the American community, which could provide them with needed technical assistance and investment capital. Vandalism, discrimination and lack of social contacts with Americans are serious problems. Many Hmong from other parts of the country are eager to join this community but their friends and relatives here now are telling them not to come to Fort Smith until the economic situation of the community improves.

Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas

Only a minority of the 360 Hmong presently living in Dallas were among those originally sponsored to the area between 1976 and 1979. In 1978, 46 families living in Dallas' inner city migrated together to Oklahoma because of harrassment. Since 1980, families have moved into the area from many parts of the country primarily because until 1982 entry-level assembly jobs were readily available in the Dallas area, even without previous training or English ability. However, in 1982 and 1983 the economy worsened and Hmong began experiencing lay-offs. Since that time, the community here has been actively attempting to control the movement of Hmong refugees into the area. The current population includes, as a result, some single young men and heads of households who have come alone to find jobs before bringing their families to the area.

The Hmong refugee community in Dallas-Fort Worth stands out among the sites investigated in this Study, primarily because of its general prosperity (the result of substantial employment) and the concomitant very low level of welfare dependence. Every Hmong household in the Dallas area has at least one person working, and a high percentage have

more than one. A substantial number of jobs held by men pay more than minimum wage; virtually all provide 80% medical coverage. While gaining work experience of value in future job-seeking, Hmong families have been able to accumulate small savings, buy cars, and pay their own tuition when necessary to enroll in ESL classes, job training and higher education. Hmong do not have businesses or farm land, but 16 families own their homes.

Hmong resettlement in the Dallas-Fort Worth area has all the earmarks of success. A substantial proportion of the Hmong there have been educated in Laos or elsewhere in the U.S., have studied English and developed job skills and have come to Dallas to take advantage of the employment opportunities available. Another segment of this Hmong community is perhaps only temporarily self-sufficient. They are adults with little education or English skills; when they were resettled in Texas their sponsors quickly found them jobs, but they did not learn English. They may yet suffer serious consequences from the emphasis that service providers in Texas and some Hmong themselves have placed on immediate employment and economic self-sufficiency instead of education, training and social services. The lay-offs in 1982 and 1983 have increased the labor pool, which has meant that companies can screen applicants more carefully. Persons being laid off now have a difficult time being hired elsewhere. Thus, whether all of the Hmong in the area can expect to maintain their relative prosperity is questionable.

The future seems most promising for the young people in this community. Unlike Hmong students in most other communities studied, nearly all of the Hmong high school students in the Dallas-Fort Worth area are staying in school and graduating. Even more remarkable is the

percentage who are going on to college--at least 90%. In this small community, there are 17 Hmong students in college and 15 more are expected to attend in the coming year. The young people's strong sense of community responsibility and firm belief in the value of education and a well organized student association have played a large role in this very high rate of participation in higher education.

Fresno, California

Fresno was chosen for study because it is now the largest Hmong community in the United States and it is located in an area which has been the target of massive secondary migration by the Hmong in this country--the Central Valley of California. During the late 1970s, a few Hmong families moved into the Fresno area and operated small farms. Word of their "success" spread quickly, and some Hmong started migrating there from other areas. After 1981, rapid growth took place in the population, due almost entirely to secondary migration from states across the country, but mainly from Oregon and Orange County, California. In the past 2 years, 9,000 to 10,000 Hmong have moved to Fresno and people are still moving there. (The Central Valley as a whole has drawn nearly 20,000 Hmong during that time.) In-migration to Fresno is continuing at the rate of approximately 500 new families per month--a rate projected to boost the Hmong population in Fresno to about 12,000 by September 1983.

A variety of factors have attracted the Hmong to the Central Valley: perceived economic betterment, family reunification, the possibility of farming, access to ESL training, relatively low rents, and a warmer climate. However, although the agricultural sector of Fresno's economy has been growing in recent years, the unemployment rate there has also

been on the rise, reaching 13.8% in 1982 and estimated at 15% for 1983. Not surprisingly, there are few employment opportunities for the Hmong in Fresno. Only 5 to 10% have jobs, and though a sizeable number of families are doing some farming, over three-quarters of the Hmong in Fresno County receive some public assistance. The fact that welfare regulations may act as disincentives to employment stands out in sharp relief in Fresno. For recipients of public assistance the limitation of work to 100 hours a month, for example, makes it difficult for members of large families to take part-time jobs or start farming. There is little provision to support what often needs to be a gradual transition from welfare dependence to economic self-sufficiency, particularly important for individuals with little education, limited job experience and few job-search skills.

Because so many Hmong have come to Fresno in such a short period of time, agencies providing social services and training for the Hmong have been overloaded. In addition, the high concentration of Hmong in Fresno's low income housing is socially isolating the Hmong from other groups. The effects of this isolation on the Hmong's relative rates of English acquisition, educational attainment and economic assimilation can only be estimated at present. The economic situation is grim and social services are limited, yet there is a feeling of hope for the future in Fresno. The community is still taking shape; its limits and potential have yet to be defined.

APPENDIX 2A

HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY COMMUNITY INFORMANTS' ESTIMATES OF HMONG COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS*

PART 1

State	City	Number of Families					No. of Heads of Household Working	No. of People Working	No. of Household With No One Working	No. of People Who Worked Seasonally During Preceding Year
		1983	1982	1981	1980	1979				
AL	Mobile	2	11	13	11	11	2	2	0	0
AR	Little Rock	11	20	38	20	4	11	26	0	0
CA	Stockton	450	250	120	45	15	15	15	435	0
CA	Merced						50	50		0
CA	Sacramento	350	300	12	6	6	35	47	115	0
CA	Richmond	42	25	15	10	5	6	6	36	0
CA	Banning	100	75	75	75	0	25	25	75	0
CA	San Diego	200	300	300	400	400	40	60	160	0
CA	Long Beach	110	150	330	400	70	17	23	70	0
CO	Denver	200	350	550	550	350	160	190	40	0
CT	Manchester	6	6	6	4	2	6	10	0	0
GA	Decatur	35	27	23	3	3	33	46	2	0
IA	Des Moines	90	189	189	150	150	77	77	13	30
IL	Hanover Park	6	12	7	4	3	6	11	0	0
IL	Chicago	64	64	104	110	175	48	60	16	0
IL	Park Forest	1	14	14	12	7	0	0	1	0
IN	Greenfield	5	5	9	9	9	5	11	0	0

*These figures are based on calls made by Hmong staff members to key informants in Hmong communities existing throughout the United States at the time of the Study. Data on the seven Hmong communities studied in depth (Orange County, CA; Fresno, CA; Portland, OR; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; Fort Smith, AR; Providence, RI) can be found in Chapter III of this report and in the individual site reports. These estimates may differ from ORR's estimates of Hmong in the United States (see Appendix 3). No attempt has been made to resolve these differences; the varying estimates are presented as they were gathered.

APPENDIX 2A

**HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY
COMMUNITY INFORMANTS' ESTIMATES OF
HMONG COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS***

PART 1

State	City	Number of Families					No. of Heads of Household Working	No. of People Working	No. of Household With No One Working	No. of People Who Worked Seasonally During Preceding Year
		1983	1982	1981	1980	1979				
IN	Ft. Wayne	4	12	12	18	18	3	6	1	3
IN	Indianapolis	7	7	7	12	9	5	10	0	0
KS	Kansas City	115	250	200	150	70	6	0	109	0
KY	Louisville	6	15	35	30	11	5	6	1	2
MA	Boston	20	35	35	22	3	20	35	0	0
MI	Petosky	2	4	--	--	--	2	9	0	5
MI	Detroit	127	127	106	84	37	40	65	87	0
MI	Grand Ledge	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	0
MI	Lansing	118	105	72	64	60	35	49	83	0
MI	Saginaw	50	42	35	20	8	20	32	30	0
MO	Missoula	50	80	80	100	85	15	25	25	0
NC	Marion	10	17	17	10	10	6	12	4	0
NC	Morganton	24	30	30	15	6	19	27	5	0
NV	Las Vegas	20	20	15	10	5	20	40	0	0
NY	Syracuse	29	29	35	35	40	15	20	14	0
OH	Columbus	17	16	20	20	30	8	9	9	0
OH	Toledo	114	103	110	114	83	12	31	102	10

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APPENDIX 2A
 HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY
 COMMUNITY INFORMANTS' ESTIMATES OF
 HMONG COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS*
 PART 1

State	City	Number of Families					No. of Heads of Household Working	No. of People Working	No. of Household With No One Working	No. of People Who Worked Seasonally During Preceding Year
		1983	1982	1981	1980	1979				
OH	Akron	36	36	36	36	36	21	25	15	4
OK	Lawton	2	20	20	64	78	2	3	0	0
OK	Tulsa	100	167	500	350	70	60	85	240	0
OK	Oklahoma City	8	35	20	10	6	8	15	0	0
OR	Salem	13	22	33	36	34	10	10	3	3
SC	Spartanburg	9	10	10	10	7	9	14	1	0
TN	Memphis	30	40	40	40	50	25	27	5	0
UT	Salt Lake City	130	180	213	367	170	115	172	15	0
UT	Ogden	10	18	18	10	8	9	11	1	0
UT	Orem	35	450	250	250	150	35	70	0	0
WA	Seattle	160	--	--	--	--	112	152	28	3
WA	Spokane	65	150	150	150	150	80	55	200	10
WI	Milwaukee	270	230	180	80	9	30	65	240	0
WI	Sheboygan	105	85	105	94	65	21	60	84	0
WI	Manitowoc	60	54	40	40	30	10	31	50	20
WI	La Crosse	115	32	6	3	2	20	20	95	10
WI	Eau Claire	119	167	197	200	170	30	65	89	13

*These figures are based on calls made by Hmong staff members to key informants in Hmong communities existing throughout the United States at the time of the Study. Data on the seven Hmong communities studied in depth (Orange County, CA; Fresno, CA; Portland, OR; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; Fort Smith, AR; Providence, RI) can be found in Chapter III of this report and in the individual site reports. These estimates may differ from ORR's estimates of Hmong in the United States (see Appendix 3). No attempt has been made to resolve these differences; the varying estimates are presented as they were gathered.

APPENDIX 2B

HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY COMMUNITY INFORMANTS' ESTIMATES OF HMONG COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS*

PART 2

State	City	No. of Families 1983	No. of Months Worked Seasonally	No. Joining "New Faith"	No. of Families Who Own Home	No. of Families Living In Cluster Housing	No. of Students Currently Attending College In Local Area	No. of Suicides
AL	Mobile	2	0	0	1	0	1	0
AR	Little Rock	11	0	70	5	0	1	0
CA	Stockton	450	0	50	0	315	20	0
CA	Merced		0	35	2	60	50	1
CA	Sacramento	350	0	30	0	245	10	0
CA	Richmond	42	0	80	0	25	4	0
CA	Banning	100	0	65	32	10	1	0
CA	San Diego	200	0	50	1	199	2	0
CA	Long Beach	116	0	23	1	81	10	0
CO	Denver	200	0	50	17	40	20	0
CT	Manchester	6	0	5	1	0	0	0
GA	Decatur	35	0	100	12	6	0	0
IA	Des Moines	90	4	90	5	0	13	0
IL	Hanover Park	6	0	70	0	6	0	0
IL	Chicago	64	0	80	2	20	10	0
IL	Park Forest	1	0	100	0	0	0	0
IN	Greenfield	5	0	100	2	2	4	0

*These figures are based on calls made by Hmong staff members to key informants in Hmong communities existing throughout the United States at the time of the Study. Data on the seven Hmong communities studied in depth (Orange County, CA; Fresno, CA; Portland, OR; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; Fort Smith, AR; Providence, RI) can be found in Chapter III of this report and in the individual site reports. These estimates may differ from ORR's estimates of Hmong in the United States (see Appendix 3). No attempt has been made to resolve these differences; the varying estimates are presented as they were gathered.

APPENDIX 2B

HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY
COMMUNITY INFORMANTS' ESTIMATES OF
HMONG COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS*

PART 2

State	City	No. of Families 1983	No. of Months Worked Seasonally	No. Joining "New Faith"	No. of Families Who Own Homes	No. of Families Living In Cluster Housing	No. of Students Currently Attending College In Local Area	No. of Suicides
IN	Ft. Wayne	4	3	100	2	0	4	0
IN	Indianapolis	7	0	100	4	0	2	0
KS	Kansas City	115	0	90	2	103	8	0
KY	Louisville	6	9	100	0	0	2	0
MA	Boston	20	0	5	3	0	1	0
MI	Petosky	2	3	100	1	0	1	0
MI	Detroit	127	0	70	6	4	6	1
MI	Grand Ledge	3	0	100	1	0	0	0
MI	Lansing	118	0	80	4	6	0	0
MI	Saginaw	50	0	70	8	2	5	1
MO	Missoula	50	0	25	3	39	4	0
NC	Marion	10	0	100	3	0	2	0
NC	Morganton	24	0	1	12	0	3	0
NV	Las Vegas	20	0	90	2	103	8	0
NY	Syracuse	29	0	100	2	2	9	0
OH	Columbus	17	0	99	2	0	0	0
OH	Toledo	114	3	10	0	11	11	0

*These figures are based on calls made by Hmong staff members to key informants in Hmong communities existing throughout the United States at the time of the Study. Data on the seven Hmong communities studied in depth (Orange County, CA; Fresno, CA; Portland, OR; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; Fort Smith, AR; Providence, RI) can be found in Chapter III of this report and in the individual site reports. These estimates may differ from ORR's estimates of Hmong in the United States (see Appendix 3). No attempt has been made to resolve these differences; the varying estimates are presented as they were gathered.

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HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY COMMUNITY INFORMANTS' ESTIMATES OF HMONG COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS*

PART 2

State	City	No. of Families 1983	No. of Months Worked Seasonally	No. Joining "New Faith"	No. of Families Who Own Home	No. of Families Living In Cluster Housing	No. of Students Currently Attending College In Local Area	No. of Suicides
OH	Akron	36	7	25	4	16	0	0
OK	Lawton	2	0	100	0	0	0	1
OK	Tulsa	100	0	20	0	50	0	0
OK	Oklahoma City	8	0	40	0	0	0	0
OR	Salem	13	3	90	1	7	2	0
SC	Spartanburg	9	0	100	6	0	0	0
TN	Memphis	30	0	100	3	6	2	0
UT	Salt Lake City	130	0	80	11	35	10	0
UT	Ogden	10	0	100	1	0	0	0
UT	Orem	35	0	100	35	0	16	0
WA	Seattle	160	4	68	10	85	3	0
WA	Spokane	65	0	20	5	9	12	0
WI	Milwaukee	270	0	60	5	14	8	0
WI	Sheboygan	105	0	90	4	0	4	0
WI	Maintowoc	60	3	20	1	33	1	0
WI	La Crosse	115	3	17	1	5	1	0
WI	Eau Claire	119	3	18	1	10	18	0

*These figures are based on calls made by Hmong staff members to key informants in Hmong communities existing throughout the United States at the time of the Study. Data on the seven Hmong communities studied in depth (Orange County, CA; Fresno, CA; Portland, OR; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Dallas-Fort Worth, TX; Fort Smith, AR; Providence, RI) can be found in Chapter III of this report and in the individual site reports. These estimates may differ from ORR's estimates of Hmong in the United States (see Appendix 3). No attempt has been made to resolve these differences; the varying estimates are presented as they were gathered.

APPENDIX 2B

HMONG RESETTLEMENT STUDY

COMMUNITY INFORMANTS' ESTIMATES OF HMONG COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS*

PART 2

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APPENDIX 3

ORR ESTIMATED HIGHLAND LAO POPULATION AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RATES IN THE UNITED STATES*

MAY 1983

<u>Community</u>	<u>Highland Lao Population (Hmong except when otherwise stated)</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>Public Assistance Rate (% of Families)</u>
<u>REGION I-II</u>			
<u>Connecticut</u>			
Greater Hartford	212	36	30
<u>Massachusetts</u>			
Fitchburg	220	47	42
<u>Rhode Island</u>			
Providence	2,300	280	30
<u>REGION III</u>			
<u>New York</u>			
Syracuse	160	27	25
<u>Pennsylvania</u>			
Philadelphia	1,200	200	100
<u>REGION IV</u>			
<u>Tennessee</u>			
Memphis	450	55	0
<u>South Carolina</u>			
Spartansburg	75	10	0
<u>Alabama</u>			
Montgomery	100 Mien	22	0
Selma	100	30	2-4 families
<u>North Carolina</u>			
Marion/Morgantown	450	62	0
<u>Georgia</u>			
Atlanta	500	50	20

*Hmong/Highland Lao Workgroup information collection activity.

APPENDIX 3
ORR ESTIMATED HIGHLAND LAO POPULATION AND
PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RATES IN THE UNITED STATES*

MAY 1983

<u>Community</u>	<u>Highland Lao Population</u> (Hmong except when otherwise stated)	<u>Number of</u> <u>Families</u>	<u>Public Assistance</u> <u>Rate</u> (% of Families)
<u>REGION V</u>			
<u>Illinois</u>			
Chicago (Cook County)	648	108	40
Wheaton	370	70	35
Barrington			
Carol Stream			
Crystal Lake			
Hanover Park			
(Suburban Chicago)			
Dixon	278	54	60
Rockford	267	43	67
Belvedere			
Joilet	265	46	65
Kankakee			
Park Forest South			
Moline	234	39	15
Rock Island			
Danville	150	17	65
Ottawa	111	26	40
Decatur	85	11	73
Rochelle	78	14	30
Dekalb			
Mattoon	17	3	0
<u>Michigan</u>			
Detroit	800	165	75
Lansing	510	110	50
Saginaw	291	53	80
<u>Indiana</u>			
Indianapolis	120	17	12

*Hmong/Highland Lao Workgroup information collection activity.

APPENDIX 3

ORR ESTIMATED HIGHLAND LAO POPULATION AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RATES IN THE UNITED STATES*

MAY 1983

<u>Community</u>	<u>Highland Lao Population (Hmong except when otherwise stated)</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>Public Assistance Rate (% of Families)</u>
<u>Minnesota</u>			
Minneapolis-St. Paul	3,730	2,738	62
Duluth	110	16	100
<u>Wisconsin</u>			
Milwaukee	1,000	216	80
Wausau	470	98	75
Sheboygan	700	105	80
LaCrosse	600	90	95
Eau Claire/ Chippewa Falls	500	105	75
Green Bay	493	85	75
Appleton	950	200	75
<u>Ohio</u>			
Toledo	350	75	84
Akron	153	49	59
Columbus	151	19	53
<u>REGION VI</u>			
<u>Arkansas</u>			
Fort Smith	300	55	0
<u>Oklahoma</u>			
Tulsa	500	70	9
Oklahoma City	44	8	5
Lawton	80	Unknown	Unknown
<u>Texas</u>			
Dallas/Ft. Worth/ Grand Prairie	300	50	12

*Hmong/Highland Lao Workgroup information collection activity.

APPENDIX 3
ORR ESTIMATED HIGHLAND LAO POPULATION AND
PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RATES IN THE UNITED STATES*

MAY 1983

<u>Community</u>	<u>Highland Lao Population (Hmong except when otherwise stated)</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>Public Assistance Rate (% of Families)</u>
<u>REGION VII-VIII</u>			
<u>Kansas</u>			
Kansas City	800	130	50-60
<u>Nebraska</u>			
Omaha	300-350	55	32
<u>Iowa</u>			
Des Moines	663	131	10
Decorah	53	10	9
Clinton	92	17	18.5
Oskaloosa	33	5	6
Pella	70	14	0
<u>Montana</u>			
Missoula	307	56	50
Billings	200	Unknown	Unknown
<u>Colorado</u>			
Denver	1,500-2,000	400	75-100 Individuals
<u>Utah</u>			
Salt Lake City	1,000	Unknown	Unknown
Provo	500	Unknown	Unknown

*Hmong/Highland Lao Workgroup information collection activity.

APPENDIX 3
 ORR ESTIMATED HIGHLAND LAO POPULATION AND
 PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RATES IN THE UNITED STATES*

MAY 1983

<u>Community</u>	<u>Highland Lao Population (Hmong except when otherwise stated)</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>Public Assistance Rate (% of Families)</u>
<u>REGION IX</u>			
<u>California</u>			
Orange County	3,000		60
Stockton	4,000 Hmong 500 Khmu		95
Merced	4,500		95
Fresno	8,000		80
Sacramento	2,500		90
San Diego	3,000		70
San Francisco	400		Unknown
Santa Barbara	700		Unknown
Los Angeles	1,500		Unknown
Riverside	1,000 Hmong & Mien		100
Visalia	200 Hmong 200 Mien 100-150 Lahu		Unknown
Contra Costa County	500 Hmong 750 Mien 450 Lao Theung		75
Oakland	1,000 Mien	1 - 1	75
Pomona	200 Mien		Unknown
Long Beach	300 Mien		Unknown
San Jose	300 Mien		Unknown
Menlo Park	40 Lahu		Unknown
Santa Rosa	100 Tinh		100
<u>Hawaii</u>			
Hawaii	100		Unknown

*Hmong/Highland Lao Workgroup information collection activity.

APPENDIX 3

OPR ESTIMATED HIGHLAND LAO POPULATION AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RATES IN THE UNITED STATES*

MAY 1983

<u>Community</u>	<u>Highland Lao Population (Hmong except when otherwise stated)</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>Public Assistance Rate (% of Families)</u>
<u>Nevada</u>			
Las Vegas	150		Unknown
<u>REGION X</u>			
<u>Washington</u>			
Spokane	400 Hmong 20 Mien	90 4	10 0
Seattle/King County	760 Hmong 550 Mien 230 Lao Theung 150 Lao Lue	155 110 44 30	10
<u>Oregon</u>			
Portland/Tri-County	970 Hmong 1,300 Mien	162 Unknown	15
Salem/Albany/Eugene	190 Hmong 100 Mien	25 17	5

*Hmong/Highland Lao Workgroup information collection activity.

APPENDIX 4

Transcript of Group Meeting with High School Students

March 1983

Q. Do the teachers know who you are?

Boy: The teachers ask, "Are you Vietnamese?" "No," we say. "We're not Vietnamese. We're Hmong, from Laos." But they don't know Hmong.

Q. Do you ever have the chance to tell the other kids where you came from and some of the things you've seen?

Girl: In English class we do. We tell where we came from and about our background.

Q. Do you have American friends? How do you meet American kids?

Boy: First of all they ask my name. Then they say, "Where do you come from?" When I first came I didn't want any American friends. I wanted to work alone. I didn't want to go out with somebody, just stay at home for six months and hope nobody bother me. I didn't know how to talk to them. I'm shy and ashamed that I can't speak. And the American kids do different things too. Maybe they don't like the way I live.

Q. Have any of you had American kids to your house?

Yes.

Girl: Sometimes I go their house. Once I stayed at my friend's house for two weeks. I meet kids at lunch in school. They come up to me and ask my name. They ask me "Who are you?" They ask me if I'm Japanese. I say I'm from Laos. They say "Where's Laos?" I say, "Go look at a map."

Q. What are your favorite subjects?

Boy: Most of us like math the best. Algebra, geometry, I like those.

Girl: I like English. I'm stupid at math.

Q. How about social studies?

Boy: Some of the Hmong like that too, but most don't like it because there's so much reading.

Q. Is it hard to study at home?

Girl: It's very hard. Hmong believe in a lot of togetherness. It's hard to study with so many people around. But you get used to it. I do some of my homework at study hall in school.

Q. Do you study in front of the T.V.?

Yes. (Everyone)

Boy: We study during the commercials. Sometimes the only time I can study is after everyone's gone to sleep and the house is finally quiet. Then it's easier.

Girl: The girls have to do everything at home. Most of the time the boys don't do anything. In Hmong's country, the boys are treated as something very, very important. The girls don't get as much respect as the older brothers.

Boy: The boy can do, but the girl must stay.

Q. What about in America?

Girl: In America, the girl has to stay at home too. It's not fair at all.

Q. What do you say to your mother if you have a big test tomorrow and she says you have to cook dinner and take care of your younger sisters?

Girl: Sometimes I do, sometimes I disobey. Sometimes you just have to do what your mom asks you to do. But if you get an F in school she doesn't know anything about it. She knows if I didn't do the homework.

Girl: The girls are dumber than the boys. They're smarter than any girls.

Q. What are you going to tell your children about school?

Girl: I think I'll treat them fair; I know how I feel when my parents don't treat me fairly.

Boy: I never thought about that.

Q. Do Hmong girls graduate from high school in _____?

Everyone: Yes.

Girl: We've only been here a year so we can't say - two girls left to get married in Utah but they're still in school. Sometimes if you love a guy and you don't want to marry him it's hard to find someone as good as him to love. Sometimes the parents find someone for you to marry. The parents just don't care about your schooling. They just like that guy and you just have to marry him.

Boy: If I love a girl but the parents don't like me - they like another guy, the parents will trick their daughter to like the other guy.

Q. What if you don't like the guy that your father likes?

Girl: You can't do anything. It's the Hmong's rule. It's real strict. If you don't follow what they say they'll tell you not to come back home. "You'll learn to love him," they say. "And then you'll love him your whole life."

Q. Do you think that's possible?

Boy: It's impossible for me.

Q. Is this changing in America?

Everyone: A little, but not a lot.

Q. Are you afraid that your parents will find a boy that has a big nose?

Girl: They don't care how he looks. They only want to know what kind of people the boy's family are. My parents like a boy whose parents are kind of famous.

Q. Can you convince your father that you would be very unhappy if you married someone you didn't like?

Girl: In our country the girl does not talk to her dad about boyfriends. If your father wants you to do something, you can't reject. The boys can get away with disobeying their parents. But never the girls. Our parents say, "We are older. We know better than you." Sometimes they do know better than us, but sometimes they don't.

Q. How many of you would like to go to college?

Girl: For the girl it's very hard because we're expected to stay home and do the work and the boy will go to school. Usually the father loves the boy more than the girl. But the mom loves the girl more than the boy.

Q. What do you study in college? (to the boy in college)

I study business administration.

Q. What gave you the courage to go to college?

My friend told me to go. He says that the Hmong need business to help their future. So I decided to try for my father and my family. Some of my friends would like to go to college but they must support their family. When they graduate from high school they get a full time job. Also, their English is not good enough. I decided to go myself. When I decided to go to college, my father pushed me, and so I have to. The reason I get to go to college is that my older sister stays at home and goes to the chicken factory.

Q. Are there any high school kids who work in the factory?

Yes, my sister does. She's 18. She takes three classes a day and has a part-time job at school as a teacher aide. After that she goes to the place for 8 hours. She works from 4 till midnight. She gets up earlier than me.

Q. One of the problems in _____, the Hmong kids say, is there's no chance for the boys and girls in high school to be friends. Our parents

keep us apart. So out of desperation some high school kids get married. If we could have some friendships and get to know each other then we [you] wouldn't have to get married. (What about here?)

Everyone: That's right.

Girl: We can't have dates like Americans. Every Friday night my American friends have dates. Sometimes an American guy asks me, "You want to go out with me?" I say "yes." But when I come home my dad says "No. You can't go. You're different." He always says that. He says, "You're different from the Americans. You can't like an American." But my older sister married an American. He said that's enough, already his oldest daughter is gone to Americans. My parents want to keep the girls away from the boys. If a girl goes out with a guy for even one night, she's going to get trouble from her parents.

Q. What does your father mean by saying "We are different"?

Girl: I think he means how we look. It's the color of our skin gives us a different tradition. But I never ask him. He always says that to me, though.

It's okay to have friends, but it's harder to be anything more than friends. You can't show your feelings. You can't just say, "I love you" like that. You have to keep it in your heart. You can only say "I like you." That's a problem with being Hmong. But I think it's changing. I hope.

The boys have a lot of chances to decide for themselves about who they want to marry. But the girls don't.

Q. In _____, Hmong kids say their parents don't know too much about reproduction and sexuality. That's one reason why there's a lot of pregnancies in _____; none of the kids have much chance to be warned about birth control and biology. (What about here?)

Boy: Yes. Our mother and father never go to school, so they never know about health.

Girl: They never talk to you about sex. If you want to know something you just can't go up and ask. It's really hard for the girls, it's easier to ask their moms. She can tell you what she knows.

Q. What do you think - do you ever talk to your dad about sex?

Boy: No. We never talk about it. We have to learn from health class at school.

Girl: My dad says be careful, but he never says what you have to do to be careful!

Q. You have to be translators at home, right?

Boy: If someone comes. My father says go talk to him and he runs out. Especially if an American comes for money, they don't even want to know about it.

Q. Do any of the guys play sports at school?

Boy: Yeah. Most of us like soccer the best. It's Hmong's favorite. Some like basketball. Volleyball. But no one play football, yet.

Q. Is that a way to meet American kids?

Yes. We played last year. They're big and strong. But we're faster.

Q. Do you go and watch the guys play?

Girl: Sometimes. But we have to go with our parents. I feel like I'm being watched all the time. I asked my parents if I could cut my hair. They said no. If my mom said yes, but if my father says no, then I can't. That's it. He says it's a tradition for Hmong girls. He said we should keep our traditions. My friends have short hair. All the girls have short hair. I'd like to have short hair too.

Q. Do some people get married to have freedom?

Girl: Sometimes, yeah.

Q. If you're married do you have equal rights with your husband?

Girl: No! It's real different. You have to obey your husband - everything he says. But still it's better than being a daughter. I think. But I don't know. I'm not married. If my husband tells me to take off his shoes, then that's what I have to do.

Q. You have an older sister that's married, what does she say?

Girl: She says it's very hard. You have to cook all by yourself and when you have children it's even harder. When your husband comes back from work, he watches T.V. and you do the work. You wash the clothes and do the cooking and everything around the house. But my sister is happy.

Boy: But the wife doesn't have to go to work. She stays home. The husband has to support the family. He has to do the heavy thing. The wife has to take care of everything at home.

Q. But many Hmong wives work, right?

Girl: Yes, now it's changing. Sometimes the husband stays home. But when the wife comes home, nobody helps her take off her shoes. She does that by herself. She has to cook. Sometimes she doesn't cook. She just watches the children, that's it.

Q. When you marry you have the opportunity to change and be different from your parents.

Girl: Not us. But our children. Our children will live like the American people. The young people like the American ways, but not the older people. They say "Go out with girls, is no good."

Q. How many of you can write Hmong?

Almost everyone.

Q. How did you learn?

Girl: I learned from a friend. She's Hmong, and knows how to write Hmong. I know how to write American so we teach each other.

Q. Do you write to your friends in English or Hmong?

In English. (Everyone in English)

Girl: I can read Hmong but not spell it. There's so many consonants.

Boy: Most of us learn by reading and singing songs in Hmong.

Q. What's going to happen to the Hmong language?

Girl: I don't think it will disappear. I think it will always be with us. Sure we learn English in school, but when we come home nobody speaks English in your family. Even the little kids - they don't speak English.

Girl: We learn a lot from T.V.

Q. Like what?

Girl: Vocabulary words. Sometimes they say words you don't know but then they use it in a sentence and you can figure it out.

Boy: We use English and Hmong. Couple of words English, then couple words Hmong. It's easy to talk that way. When we live in Laos, we talk Lao and Hmong. In America we use Lao and Hmong and English. Three languages together.

Q. Do your parents ever ask you about school?

Girl: Usually they don't ask. They never ask me what I did in school today. Certainly they care. But they just don't ask me. Sometimes my mom asks me what I did in school, I say, "Nothing!" If she asks me a couple of times, I say "Math." If I say anything more about chemistry or physics she won't understand. She knows she won't understand me.

Q. Have your parents ever been to meet any of your teachers?

Girl: Yeah.

Q. What happens?

Girl: You translate for them.

Q. What do the teachers say? And the parents to the teachers?

Girl: My English teacher told my parents that I did good in English. But I translated for my parents "that I was a nice girl." I didn't say what my teacher said. (laughter)

Q. How come?

Girl: It's kinda hard. If you tell them you're good in English. It's kinda hard to tell them the truth. You're ashamed to say that you're good to your parents. We have tremendous respect for our parents. For my dad. You never want to say I'm perfect, I'm good. I'm good at English. Instead, I told him that the teacher said I'm a nice girl, I'm nice.

Q. What kinds of questions do your parents ask the teachers?

Girl: My parents ask "Where do you live?" But I translated "How's she doing in English?" Other times, I translate whatever comes into my mind. My teacher knows me pretty well. Later she says, "What did your parents really say?" And I told her.

Girl: Teachers like Hmong, 'cause we're really quiet. I hardly ever talk in class, only to answer the question. I'm really shy in school.

Q. What does being shy mean?

Girl: I'm really scared inside. If the teacher walks by, I'm scared she'll ask me something I don't understand. The way you look and the way you dress, makes me shy too.

Boy: If you don't understand something, you're ashamed to say that you don't know and you're scared that way too.

Girl: When she calls on you, you have to stand up and everyone's looking at you. That's the thing I'm scared of. It's embarrassing when the teacher asks you something that you don't understand. You can't tell them you don't understand. It's embarrassing.

Girl: If you want to wear jeans, your parents say no. If you want to wear something that fits you - that's kinda tight, they say no. Our parents don't have much money. So we can't buy the things we want. We have to buy clothes that look cheap. I'm embarrassed what I wear to school.

Q. Do you ever do pa ndau?

Girl: We don't take the time to do it. My mother showed me but I never take the time. I say, "Mom, they've got sewing machines now." She says "This is the Hmong way." "But Mom, it's easier with a sewing machine."

Q. Do you ever go to dances at school?

Girl: They usually cost money and the boys don't ask us because they know our fathers won't let us go. We stay home, but sometimes the boys sneak out to the dance. My brother did it twice. He told me. What did my dad say when he found out? "He's your brother." It's better to be a boy.

Girl: My parents surprise me a lot. I never thought my mother would learn to drive. But she did. She never went to school. But many learn to drive

Q. You parents are also changing a lot too.

Boy: Yes, very, very much.

Girl: They speak English too. My dad doesn't speak much English, but he understands a lot. Once my older sister, she told me that she loved somebody. My dad knew what she said! He got pretty excited. My sister said, "Just kidding dad. Just joking dad."

Q. Most of you said you only lived in about one year.

Boy: Most of, yes. I'm in the third family to come, one year and a half ago. Before that there was only two Hmong families in. We know this is a good place to live, so we come here. We don't want to move anymore. It's not a big town but there's good living here. We have a chance to buy farms. Houses are not too expensive to rent. In a big town you have bad people.

Q. Are Blacks mean to you, or do they not see you, or are they friendly?

Some Blacks call us "Jap" or "Chinese" and we know they don't like us. The black don't like the yellow.

Q. Do they fight you?

Boy: They want to fight. But we don't. So they don't do nothing. Just say, "Get out kid." But other Black people are nice. Most are nice to me. I have many Black friends in high school here. But not in other cities. In California, they never see you.

Girl: It's really nice here. Almost everyone is friendly to us.

-End of meeting-